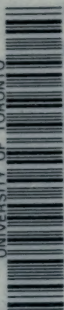
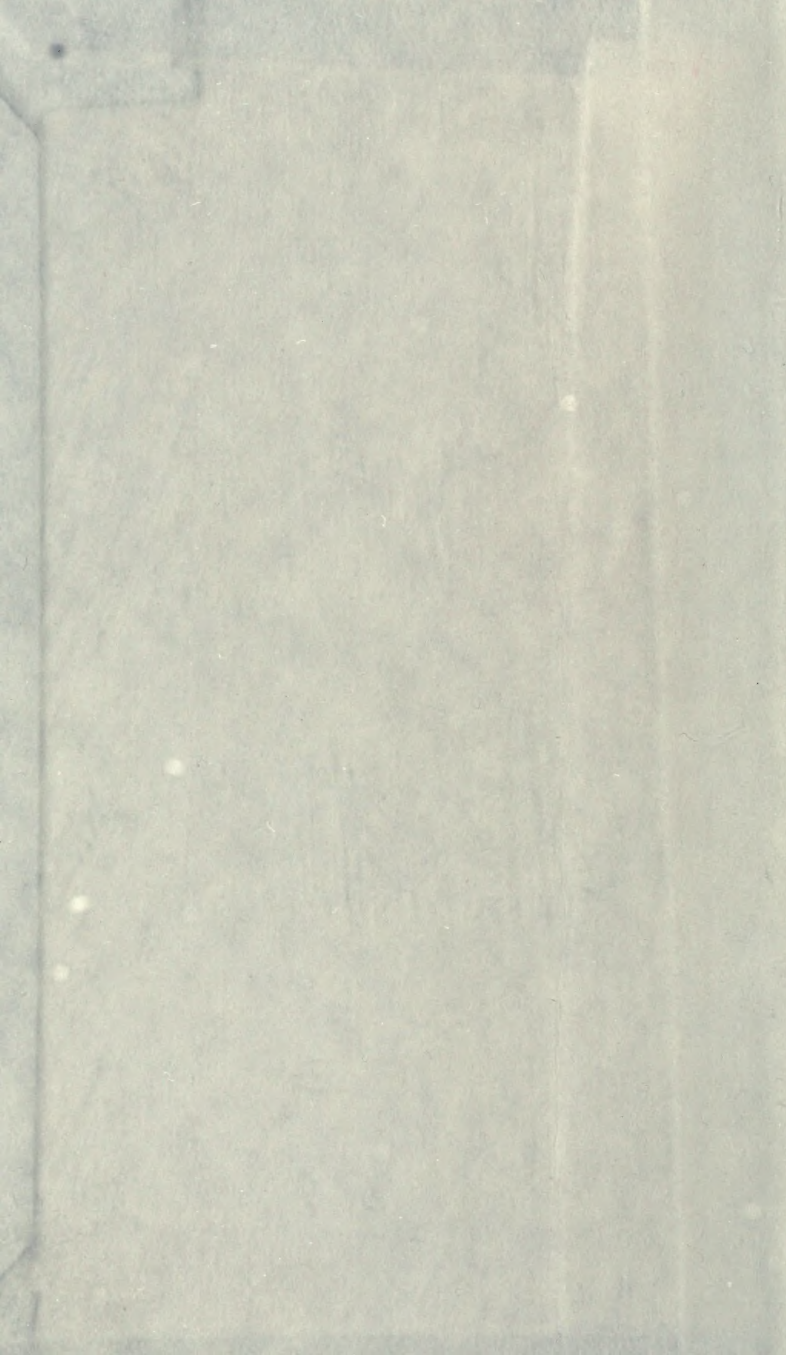


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THE MIND OF A WOMAN

WITH THE CRITICISM OF CRISTINA

THE MIND OF A WOMAN

LONDON

EDWARD ARNOLD & CO.

1911

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THE MIND OF A WOMAN

THE MIND OF A WOMAN

BY

MRS. PHILIP CHAMPION DE CRESPIGNY

"And even to-day I will wager that no man
Can fathom the mind or the depths of a woman."

Queen Elizabeth.

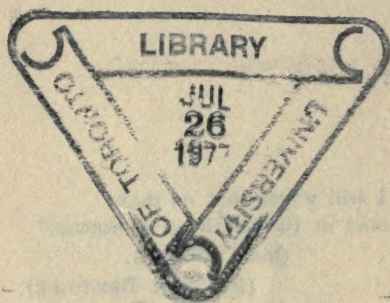
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FOREWORD

The following pages have been written not as a record of notable women in history, but to present the case for and against them as a sex when claiming an equal capacity with men for a part in the government. Names have been put forward not from any special historical interest but as types or instances bearing on the discussion of different qualities, inherent or otherwise, and for the purpose of indicating woman's place in the scheme of evolution. This point of view should be borne in mind when names sufficiently notable in history for mention appear to have been overlooked, or when instances are given of persons and incidents so familiar as to be almost threadbare. The interest is psychological rather than historical.

As I have been fortunate enough to have drawn winning numbers with regard to the men with whom I have been intimately associated, it has been possible perhaps to present the woman's point of view in a manner more detached than if influenced by personal grievances.

ROSE CH. DE CRESPIGNY.

THE RIVIER

The Rivier is a small town in the north-west of the island of Sumatra, in the Dutch East Indies. It is situated on the left bank of the river of the same name, which flows into the sea at the mouth of the island. The town is built on a hill, and is surrounded by a wall. It is a very old town, and has a long history. It was founded by the Dutch in the year 1600, and has since that time been a important town in the island. It is now the capital of the province of Sumatra, and is a very large and important town. It is situated on the left bank of the river of the same name, which flows into the sea at the mouth of the island. The town is built on a hill, and is surrounded by a wall. It is a very old town, and has a long history. It was founded by the Dutch in the year 1600, and has since that time been a important town in the island. It is now the capital of the province of Sumatra, and is a very large and important town.

THE RIVIER

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THE MIND OF A WOMAN

CHAPTER I

THE CURSE OF EVE

In most religions, traditions and mythologies of the succeeding civilizations of the world the legend of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, typifying the fall of Man, is presented either as fact or metaphor.

The story of man's descent, be it symbolical or otherwise, has formed the basis for the story of man's ascent, with woman, as source of the primary disaster, the chief sufferer in the subsequent penalties. Whether a transition from a state of innocency, and therefore irresponsibility, to the exercise of free-will with its resulting liabilities can truly be regarded as a fall, may possibly be open to controversy, but whatever the decision, the implication remains—that for what followed woman was mainly responsible, thereby drawing upon herself consequences that have dogged her throughout all succeeding generations. Even those who may not admit a substratum of truth in the ancient narrative, must at least acknowledge a certain degree of justification for that admission, in the obvious fact that through-

out centuries of time, the rise and fall of civilizations, the waxing and waning of nations, in spite of impotent struggle and secret or open rebellion, the curse of Eve has clung persistently to her descendants, oppressing, limiting, handicapping her in the battle of life, humiliating and quenching the fires of her youth and aspirations, and it is in face and in spite of it that her evolution has been and is being accomplished.

The origin of the legend, in whatever guise it be presented, is untraceable, lost in the past history of a planet whose age defies man's attempts at definite calculations. But whether we argue forward, from a cause that must be hypothetical, to results coming within the range of our own observation, or backwards from those results to the hypothetical origin, the obvious disabilities and limitations of woman's environment might lead to the suspicion of a truth in some form, symbolical or actual, underlying the ancient legend. Such a suspicion would at all events be excusable from a sex condemned from then onwards to subjection, limitation, and the humiliating processes of achieving even legitimate ends by the indirect means of cajolery rather than plain speaking.

One may suppose as the most plausible hypothesis that the legend symbolizes the descent of spirit into matter for the purpose of individualization, not only of man, but of races and nations. It would appear from the nature of the ban laid upon her, that woman through her error lost this right to

individualize—temporarily—and set out therefore on the task of self-evolution handicapped from the start. She was to become man's shadow rather than a helpmeet on terms of equality, to live in subjection, helpless victim of his whims and idiosyncrasies, to find content in self-effacement, happiness in ministering to his wants. She was to incur penalties where he went scot-free. The man was to stand between her and self-development, so far as this world was concerned, and, according to opinion during the earlier stages of the race, even in the next! He ruled her actions, and has even fancied he ruled her thoughts. The curse was very inclusive: "in subjection" covers all this ground and more; she was by no possibility to stand in man's way, to be his rival. Her very soul was no longer to be her own. To care for his creature comforts, bear his children, echo his sentiments, and give little or no trouble was henceforth to be her part in the scheme of creation. Not only was she to give no trouble, but to find in this ordained order of things, content and perfect satisfaction and to ask no more of life.

Man too was cursed, according to the legend. But as the initial blame did not lie with him, between the nature of his penalties and the woman's lay an essential difference, wide as the Poles, a difference that has never been sufficiently taken into account.

To man was decreed war with the conditions of matter. He was to wrestle with the soil, to wring from earth her treasure by the sweat of his brow, to develop muscle and sinew, in overcoming

the material obstacles between himself and a livelihood. He was to dig or starve ; to work for his dinner, to outwit the animals ; along the line of tangible, actual results his triumph was to be achieved.

Woman's war was to be of the spirit. Her struggle towards final redemption was to be run on more subtle lines, more difficult to sustain, less conspicuous in their successes. Pain and sorrow, abasement, limitation, disillusionment were to be her lot, her constant enemies. Through subjection, the privilege of individualization slipped from her, the fruition of ambition, the right to independence of thought or action. She was to become a chattel, subject to man's will, obedient to every caprice, without rights, without citizenship, with no appeal. To be owned, body and soul, by another.

Merged in that other's personality she had to learn self-denial, patience, to master her soul, to suffer in silence, possibly even to let genius atrophy and perish for want of outlet—and moreover to look as if she liked it ! To do another's bidding, to sink her own desires though every pulse and instinct might fiercely rebel.

And they did rebel—be sure of that. The fault was not essentially man's in those early primitive days when habit was formed, trains of thought set going along definite grooves that were to leave their impress on succeeding generations. Eve of the Biblical legend had brought it on herself ; in this parable of the birth of self-conscious humanity she

was the most to blame ; it was quite fit she should suffer. And man with the urge towards individualization acting as stimulus, naturally appropriated to himself all within reach that would help to further it. It was the task set him. The development of self was the law imposed upon humanity in its infancy ; man, of necessity became self-centred and blind—not wilfully, but thoughtlessly—to the inner conditions that ruled the lives of even those nearest to him.

Woman therefore has fought and is still fighting her way towards self-expression in spite of far more subtle obstacles than man has had to face, every difficulty put in her way, a hand very rarely extended through past ages to help her over stiles. Man's attitude towards her varied with his mood. She was slave or goddess according to whether his state was normal or whether he was in love, the attitude in both cases prompted by what he eventually hoped to receive. Human nature in the raw obeys its primitive instincts, which is to get, and give in return as little as possible. From woman as slave he could extort what service he wished by the strength of his arm ; from woman as goddess the one thing he sought—returned affection—had to be won by persuasion, display of prowess, patience, or appeal to the true mating instinct. He had in fact to pay for it. Is it surprising the woman, finding there only lay her strength, should have made the most of it, even abusing it in the all-too-fleeting moments of conscious power ?

Throughout the world's history man has never been able to look through woman's eyes, never understood the psychology of her, either collectively or individually. From the beginning of all things the basic characteristics and potentialities of womanhood have been essentially the same. That for the first time she is finding her voice does not by any means argue that hitherto she has had nothing to say. That she is only now beginning to speak out, to protest, is due purely to lack of opportunity in the past, not to any real change of instinct or inherent desire. What woman is saying now, she would have said through all time had not the right to speak been withheld from her sex. That this is so, the story of the evolution of the race, read between the lines, clearly reveals.

Taking the legend as a poetical rendering of a fundamental truth, Eve when first created was not placed in subjection to the other sex, so much is implied by the subsequent infliction of the penalty. She was bone of man's bone—otherwise, of like substance, with the same impulses towards and potentialities for individualization and extension of consciousness. In the shadow of the legendary curse her life became one long suppression, hedged with limitations, frayed by a sense of injustice and tyranny. She was inwardly rebellious always. The very children she had borne in pain and sorrow were claimed by the male parent to do with as he would. The small trivialities of life, the rules of the domestic circle, were in his favour; the woman

was expected to accommodate herself to his convenience. Can anyone suppose she enjoyed it ? The most succulent portions of the food fell to him, as a matter of course, the drum-sticks and knuckle-bones were the woman's lot—practically and metaphorically. If she were to make a success of life it had to be borne, uncomplainingly ; if it were not borne uncomplainingly she earned the name of shrew. Bad enough for any temperament, but surely worse when the consciousness of powers, latent only for want of outlet, fretted eternally at the restrictions cramping all possibility of development. Any form of privilege had to be obtained through persuasion or bribery, her ends gained through her knowledge of man's moods. He went out into the world of matter to slay and capture by the strength of his arm ; primitive woman's fighting had to be done by the subtlety of her intuitions, her mother wit ; to it as often as not she owed her very existence.

Her death was in his hands no less than life. Pre-historic woman, having ministered to her husband's needs during his life, was expected to follow him into the great Unknown that she might still continue to attend to his comfort, in a hereafter that might possibly be Heaven for him, but certainly not Heaven for her !

And man through the whole of his evolution has been honestly unconscious of the storm of inner protest, of impotent rebellion, so often stirring at his side. How could it be otherwise ?

His individualization was going on apace. He was establishing the supremacy of his intellect and courage over the beasts of the field, the elements of matter; directing his powers to the outwitting and outstripping of his neighbour in the race of life. In those simple days when might was right why should he trouble himself about the physically weaker half of his own species? She was—presumably—content with her lot, and anyway did not count in the scheme of things. She was inarticulate, beating against the bars of a cage she did not even recognize, overflowing with capacity for self-expression, dynamic forces that had to be suppressed, longing for experience; and man called her capricious, uncertain, the uneasy sex, and quite past reasonable understanding!

Now that she bids fair to stand shoulder to shoulder with him in the responsibilities of life and government, and is likely to find equal opportunity for self-development, it may be instructive to investigate the origin and follow the results of the disabilities imposed on her, with a view to deciding whether on the whole the conditions of limitation and repression have militated for good or evil up to the present time; whether her equipment for the more prominent part in the greater responsibilities of life is as efficient and complete as man's; and whether—be the answer in the affirmative or otherwise—the results are due to inherent characteristics of mind and body, or merely the influence of environment. Although some basic instincts and aspira-

tions may have differed originally from those of the other sex, it does not necessarily mean the difference lies in inferiority. I should suggest rather that to environment and habit of thought rapidly running into grooves from which it has been extremely difficult to escape, most of the limitations are due which have been supposed to disqualify her for taking an active part in public life and intellectual pursuits ; an environment that, although immensely to her disadvantage in her progress towards self-development, has necessarily resulted, through those very disadvantages, in the acquirement of an endurance, intuitiveness, self-control, and adaptability, that places her on a level with man in the capacity for responsible action and independence of thought, and that henceforth the path towards ultimate perfection of the two sexes will run upon parallel lines rather than the merging of one into the other.

The point upon which I would lay special stress, and with which all thoughtful women of the present day will probably agree, is that the qualities now for the first time finding their chance for expression are no new thing in woman's equipment, but have been latent through all time, since the original ban imposed the conditions so stultifying to her efforts towards self-realization ; that she was often conscious of the potentialities she was forced to stifle, and that when, in rare instances, opportunity offered, she brought them into manifestation in spite of obstacles and hindrance that might well have proved

too strong for the most ardent spirit. In an age of barbarism it was natural for brute strength to gauge worth by a standard of muscle and sinew. The trend of general opinion once established, prejudice consolidated it into accepted fact, and even through the succeeding periods of comparative civilization the claims of woman to consideration and legal rights seem to have been granted or withheld from a sex aspect only. She was regarded as the means for the furtherance of the race, and as such to be allowed certain privileges which might tend to the good of the state, rather than as an individual with rights of her own. So far as benefiting her meant benefiting the coming generation, her welfare was considered, but as an independent soul she did not count at all.

With marriage a pure matter of bargaining between father and suitor, as it was until the early days of the Greek civilization, what chance had woman to develop even the first steps towards self-respect? Abject slavery to the male and a life of—except in some rare instances—humiliation of body and mind, must have smothered any self-respect at birth. The dowry succeeding this custom of purchase money was much the same under another name, but as it was secured to herself in the event of subsequent repudiation by her husband it gave a sort of dignity to a ceremony that had been merely the seal of a commercial transaction in its nature, and was a step upward on the difficult road of her personal evolution.

Plato was the first writer to recognize equality

in woman. But habit of thought and public opinion were too biased to be affected even by his power of argument and special pleading, and any rights accorded were still ceded with a view only to the production of strong and healthy citizens, to the mothers of the race.

So late as the early years of this century our own writers have emphasized this narrow standpoint. In referring to the elevation of women from the old conditions of slavery, their claims would appear to be built only upon the basis of morals and immoralities, and the improvement of the sex relationship, ignoring any pleas for opportunity for mental development, encouragement of the creative and imaginative faculties, and general expansion of capacity and outlook to which women are surely entitled equally with men ! Only now is the dawn of their real freedom beginning to break.

So firmly did the principle of woman's subjection take root in public opinion that she herself, fretting beneath the yoke of it, felt almost guilty in feeling resentment, however stringently she may have kept the emotion in check. Man, placed by circumstance in a position for which he has no vocation, commands a certain measure of sympathy, and should he carry out his duties in spite of his distaste, admiration ; but woman, although aware in many cases of possessing brains and energies with a great craving for the wider life, has always been condemned unheard to fritter away her capacities of mind and body in the restricted area allotted to her by

universal consent. She had no choice. Uncongenial though her predestined occupation might be, she was expected to find her life's interest in it ; with an intellect possibly capable of producing work equal to a Jane Austen or a George Eliot, or energies seeking an outlet such as was wrested from her generation by Florence Nightingale, she had to clip the wings of her imagination, stifle the urge telling her the world was at her feet, and be content to merge her individuality in that of another.

These circumstances must naturally have led to the development of qualities which should now stand her in good stead. The necessity for understanding the moods and the impulses of the opposite sex has given her an insight into the psychology of man which man has never gained into the psychology of woman—possibly never will. Woman's intuition, her subtle sensing of the man's most transient emotions, her accurate gauging of the lengths to which she could go of persuasion, opposition, or flattery, methods often essential in the preservation of the domestic peace ; her play upon his weaknesses, the exercise of her powers of appeal—these were her first and last lines of defence. This intimate understanding of the working of man's mind was all that stood between her and the strong right arm that had a way of settling abruptly arguments that threatened to come out the wrong way !

There was every reason for woman to make it her business to understand man, but none at all for

man to understand woman. Why should he? A superficial knowledge of his partner's main characteristics was all that was necessary in the interests of his own welfare.

All honour to him that in the course of his evolution he has set up a higher standard than the law of muscle and sinew, and is now ready to extend a helping hand to the daughters of Eve in their struggle against the Curse.

CHAPTER II

FIRST STEPS TOWARDS SELF-EVOLUTION

That the attributes and capacities of woman of which man is only now becoming aware have always been an integral part of her nature may be deduced from the rare occasions in the early history of the race upon which she found opportunity, or was bold enough to display them.

Ancient law was rigid in its limitations and curtailment of her rights of citizenship; even under the Hebrew law, a condition of comparative civilization, woman had practically no rights, no appeal. Her husband—or nearest male relative—stood for judge and jury; for every concession, every privilege she coveted, she was dependent on her own powers of fascination, cajolery or dissimulation. Wives and daughters were kept in absolute subjection to the male members of the family. The phraseology of the tenth commandment of Moses tells us so much. Josephus says they were not even allowed to bear witness in the law-courts on account of the “frivolity” of their sex! How often must they have watched justice go agley for want of a word from one of their own sex, in a position possibly to speak but forced under the weight of the

law to be silent ! As for hoping to obtain a fair hearing or justice for themselves where man's interests were concerned, the case would have been hopeless from the start ; and this, without deliberate intention of cruelty, but merely in accordance with established prejudice, instinctive to the male mind in his endeavour to subordinate everything to the law of his being—individualization, the evolution of the race.

But from the beginning this attitude was accepted by women themselves through force of circumstance rather than admission of inferiority other than in the matter of physical strength, and that it was secretly opposed and even fiercely resented by the thoughtful and intellectually-endowed, conscious of powers which they were given no opportunity to develop, is clearly demonstrated by the cases of open rebellion handed down through history and tradition ; one of the most notable and suggestive being that of Queen Vashti.

The story of Vashti, Queen of Ahasuerus—or Xerxes—King of Persia and Media, is the story of the first recorded effort of woman to free herself of the shackles limiting her chances for self-expansion and freedom of action. She was the pioneer of the rights of her sex and the champion of a self-respect very difficult to keep alive when regarded by others as negligible. And yet, so deeply were the grooves of prejudice and habit of thought impressed upon the minds of succeeding generations that until quite recent times, even the latter part of the last century,

Vashti was held up as a warning, and Esther her successor, complaisant and submissive, as a type of exemplary womanhood. To ascribe Vashti's action to temper and so dispose of the matter, is to stop short at the symptom instead of probing to the cause.

Even in these days of comparative openmindedness and tolerance the lot of the pioneer of any movement is hedged with prickles ; doubly so should she be a woman. Opposition, sarcasm, indulgent amusement become her daily portion ; moral courage, indifference to ridicule, patience and dogged persistence her necessary equipment. But Vashti, first to exploit the rights of her sex, to put the desire for self-respect before the instinct of self-preservation, in refusing to obey the king's command not only courted certain disgrace, but took life itself in her hands. In declining to be exhibited as her husband's chattel, to minister to his vanity and pride in the right of possession, or to expose her personal charms to the bold and covetous glances of the princes at his table, she risked possible death, and deliberately accepted dethronement and certain banishment from a place of honour coveted by her world.

She even incurred, we may be sure, the contempt and criticism of those of the sex for whose rights she was fighting, who were too ignorant and dominated by convention to understand the heroism of her rebellion.

She doubtless had a following, it is not to be

supposed she was alone in her generation. That she had secret admirers, women eating their hearts out in the fret of their limitations, with minds craving opportunity for the chance of self-expression, is to be inferred by the consequent panic on the part of King Ahasuerus and the men of his court.

They were perfectly frank in their complaint. Their pedestals were tottering ; something had to be done, and done quickly ; the canker of this unlooked-for evil must be removed before irremediable mischief befall. Vashti was to be dethroned ; banished from her husband's side—a verdict decided upon, not only as appeasement of the King's wrath, an act of retribution on the purely personal grounds of humiliation consequent on his wife's defiance, but urged by the princes and nobles of the court on general principles. This was a matter that touched them all. Vital issues hung on misplaced leniency. Ahasuerus, the male, had issued his commands and the female had refused to obey—had flouted authority, had in fact flung her cap over the windmill !

Unless definite action were taken on the spot the princes and nobles feared a change of mind on the part of the King, and the narrative certainly hints at an incipient desire for reconciliation later, to which he was not allowed to succumb.

If Vashti's conduct—so the princes candidly argued—were allowed to pass unchallenged, it would be an encouragement to all wives in all parts of the Empire to do likewise ! Man's authority would be undermined, and—from their point of view—the

ensuing results disastrous to the relative position of the sexes. There was no saying where it would stop !

Memucan, Prince of Persia, protests :

“ Vashti the Queen hath not done wrong to the King only, but also to all the Princes and to all the people that are in all the Provinces of the King Ahasuerus. For this deed of the Queen shall come abroad to all women, so that they shall despise their husbands——”¹

It was feared the canker of feminine self-assertion might even spread to the ladies of Persia ! There was no putting any bounds to the possible mischief, and swift punishment for the offender was urged unanimously, before the women should have time for organized rebellion.

This panic hardly argues a meek and submissive acquiescence in the inferiority of their sex on the part of wives and daughters !

So Vashti's heresy was nipped in the bud—one wishes to learn more of her subsequent history. She was deposed and the account of her disgrace published in all the provinces of the Empire as a warning to others of her sex who might have a leaning towards independence, “ in order that man might bear rule in his own house.”

This signifies that already men were aware of living on a volcano, that woman was bearing the yoke of the curse uneasily ; that with the slightest encouragement the suppressed fires of inarticulate protest might burst forth and cause a great deal

¹ Esther, chap. i.

of inconvenience. We may therefore conclude that even in those times when the race may be said to have hardly left its cradle, woman was already fighting her way towards individualization, fulfilling the law of her evolution against tremendous odds. If the intervening centuries have neither broken her spirit nor quenched her fires, she must assuredly have an asset to her credit which can only be acquired by control of self and a power of endurance sharpened on the whetstone of a stultifying environment.

The case of Judith the Israelite is an instance of the powers of brain and independent action that have always been latent in woman, awaiting only opportunity.

Through fortunate circumstances, Judith of the city of Bethulia, of the race of Israel, found herself unfettered by the limitations imposed by the conventions of her time ; events had left her comparatively free from male subjection and placed her in a position of independence. This no doubt accounts for the fact that she obtained a hearing.

Her husband Manasses had died leaving her all his worldly possessions, an unusual tribute of respect to her intelligence ; she had become a power in the city, untrammelled as she was by any restriction of action and with power to exercise her own judgment. She had come to count for honesty of purpose, generosity, and wisdom in the administration of her considerable wealth, a position gained through the rare opportunity of proving the innate qualities of mind and character. Had Manasses lived we

may conclude she would have remained his shadow for the whole of her life, the correct attitude for the weaker sex in the eyes of primitive man.

When Achior, also of the city, sent forth as mediator, failed in his mission of peace to Holofernes, chief captain of Nebuchadnezzar's army of invasion, Judith, had she not occupied this position of independent wealth, would certainly not have been granted a hearing by the councillors and captains ruling the city; women had no place in public affairs. The courage, ingenuity and determination she afterwards displayed would never have had an outlet, but would have smouldered, mere potentialities, their fires stifled, and she would in all probability have ended her days, not only unsung, but unconscious, herself that atrophying energies were eating her heart out, turning her perhaps into a capricious, restless specimen of what has been called the uneasy sex. The dynamic energy latent in a vast number of women without a chance for expression must find reaction in some form, and if legitimate outlet is denied the result is likely to be more or less mischievous to themselves or others.

As matters stood, Judith had her opportunity. Urged by desire to save the city and the temple of her God from defilement, she addressed the leaders in an eloquent speech, upbraiding them for having already conditionally surrendered, and pointing out the fallacy of their tactics. In her advantageous position of dependence upon no one she had the temerity to tell them plainly what she thought of

them, facing the situation, almost desperate, with courage and resourcefulness infinitely greater than their own.

Without confiding to them the details of her plan she obtained permission to adventure alone with her maid into the very heart of Nebuchadnezzar's hordes, who were known to show no mercy towards a conquered enemy—an act of almost incredible bravery at a time when women counted as among the spoils of battle, and had no appeal from the rights of might.

Her mission was successful ; she succeeded where Achior had failed ; her methods may have been those of the primitive woman, but a dauntless courage carried her through a most terrible ordeal and she returned to the city with the head of Holofernes as trophy of her success.

And having proved the saviour of the city and become for the moment its idol, she returned to her house, continued to administer the property left by her husband, and attended to the poor unobtrusively and devotedly for the rest of her life. Behind a physical courage such as this, and equal to that of any of the opposite sex, there must have lain latent a dynamic force that would have first fermented and finally atrophied, proving possibly a source of constant unrest and uneasiness had it not been for that one great opportunity for expression.

Judith found herself. Not a man in the city could have failed to accord her the respect she deserved—not as a mother of good citizens, nor as

a minister to his welfare, but as an individual with a mind as keen, a courage as fine, as his own, and equally capable of independent thought and action.

In ancient Greece we find, through the Homeric traditions and from the historical records of a later period, the general status of woman had begun to improve. The fact that monogamy had become the prevailing system and was generally adopted shows a definite step in the right direction. This concession followed many centuries of silent endurance and suffering, inarticulate not from acquiescence but from pure force of circumstances. But even that step granted no rights or acknowledgement as citizens. The only recognized source of their claims to consideration of any sort lay in their capacity as wives and mothers ; that is to say in how far they contributed to the well-being of the race, and through the race to individual man by the submissive performance of the duties he had assigned to them, within the limitations he had laid down. So far they were adjudged worthy of certain privileges.

Penelope, patient wife of the man of adventure, who finding home-life unsatisfying expected her to remain faithful and uncomplaining while he roamed the globe ; Alcestis, who died to save her husband Admetus from death at the hands of the Fates ; Iphigenia and Antigone, both examples of filial piety, were like Esther, the rebel Vashti's successor, the only types held up for admiration and emulation —beautiful types undoubtedly, examples of self-

sacrifice and devotion, to be lauded and followed throughout all ages, but exemplifying the grooves in which public opinion ran. As an individual each was negligible, the standard of her merit being the degree to which she devoted herself and her energies to husband, father or brother.

Sappho may be regarded as a brilliant exception to the woman of her day, and to have over-ridden the circumstance of sex, finding opportunity for self-expression. Possibly her friendship with Alcæus was of some assistance, and once given a lead other women speedily rallied to the call of a wider experience. That many were interested in art and literature is shown by the fact that at Mytilene she became the centre of a literary society formed entirely of women. Here indeed was an innovation, a kicking over the traces that must have astonished the preconceived ideas of feminine tastes! Her poetry has won universal admiration and enthusiasm, her lyric poems being adjudged some of the finest ever given to the world; a tribute to the creative ability of woman, demonstrating that in spite of the frequent insistence on a brain capacity inherently limited, the potentiality is there.

In a discussion as to whether the equipment of women as responsible citizens has suffered from past environment, it is instructive to note the difference between the attainments and influence of the courtesans of ancient Greece and of the more conventional—or as we say, respectable—members of the community.

In Athens during the early Greek period the courtesan was the only freed woman, and we are told she took advantage of that freedom to acquire knowledge and develop powers of mentality and artistic ability.¹ This is suggestive evidence in favour of the premise that environment has been responsible for the shortcomings of the sex, leading to the conclusion that woman, left to follow her own choice uncontrolled, has ambitions and aspirations no less than man and along similar lines, and that she turns to education as a means of self-expression and is imbued equally with him with an inherent desire for individualization and the advance of her evolution.

Even for the freed woman such a course could not have been easy in those days ; no facilities were offered her ; the driving power must have been imperative. The courtesan was subservient to none ; she ruled man through his passions and could, within certain limitations, carve out her own life, follow her particular bent with regard to modes of thought and intellectual pursuits. But we may be sure such aids to study as free libraries or special classes were closed to her sex, her opportunities for self-culture must have been very restricted, and actual obstacles probably put in her way.

With this modicum of power to make her own outlet, and to shake herself free of the fettering submission exacted from contemporaneous womanhood, the qualities of mind inherent in her found

¹ *History of European Morals.* Professor Lecky.

means of expression ; while among the conventional women of the community they remained either latent, or atrophied through enforced disuse.

Aspasia, most celebrated among the courtesan class—or *hetæraæ* as they were called—of that day, won the love of Pericles through the lure of her intellectual attainments no less than personal charm. On her account he was parted from his wife. So deeply did she make her influence felt that their son was legitimized by a special decree, although she came from Miletus and was therefore considered an alien with whom intermarriage was forbidden. She was consulted by the philosophers of Athens, permitted to discourse with them on equal terms ; Socrates himself did not consider it beneath his dignity to seek her advice. Her house was the centre of the literary society of the city, herself, a brilliant star of intellectual attainment in any firmament, the chief attraction. She was followed by others—King Ahasuerus was wise in his generation when he nipped the first shoots of female emancipation in the bud!—among her own class with freedom of choice, and she won renown as an example of educated and eloquent womanhood that will never die. Pericles owed much of his statesmanship and success in oratory to her guidance. Had she belonged to the respectable classes, whose ambitions were supposed to be bounded by the four walls of a house, in entire subjection to a husband's will, without the exercise of any personal initiative, she would doubtless have lived and died in retire-

ment, conscious of fires within she did not know how to appease ; secretly chafing at a control she did not dare openly to resent ; a discontented restless spirit seeking in vain an outlet for the expression of a self big with potentialities.

The name of Aspasia is not the only one among the courtesans of old Athens that has been handed down for prominence in intellectual power; there are others who were sought after by men, who, although carefully safeguarding themselves against rivalry in their own houses through mentally developed wives, were quite ready to acknowledge the added attraction of a cultured mind in the women whose social ostracism gave them the opportunity lacked by their more conventional sisters. The instinctive—and in primitive circumstances, justifiable—desire, prompted by self-interest in man's early struggles towards further evolution, was apparent in the civic law of the day. Had a Vashti arisen to lead her sex to open rebellion, no doubt the panic that seized the ancient despot and his followers would have possessed the men of Athens ; hasty legislation or the persuasive methods of the strong arm would have re-established things on a proper footing. But we hear of no such outburst ; perhaps because no Vashti was forthcoming at the moment, and the great mass of unthinking womanhood had been taught that submission to authority was more to be desired than mental accomplishments ; or because they were learning the hopelessness of kicking against the prick of the original

curse—but certainly not because there were no ardent spirits among them conscious of something within that longed for expression.

For it is not rational to suppose the women of the courtesan class should have absorbed all the brains of the females of their generation. Once establish the potentiality for mental or creative achievement, physiologically and psychologically in the female form—be it in one instance only—the length to which as a sex she is capable of development immediately becomes an open question which time and opportunity alone can decide. While Aspasia and her like were dazzling their world with their genius and wisdom, there must have been many who, fettered by the rules condemning them to be the property of their nearest male relative, lived and died, the surge within them unsatisfied, life itself having been a prolonged struggle to accept circumstances as they were.

CHAPTER III

WOMEN AND GREEK CIVILIZATION

In such circumstances is it surprising that some ardent spirits, conscious of a craving for the expansion of their mentality and energies, and resenting the man-made limitations that restrained them, should have chosen outlawry with comparative freedom of action to respectable slavery, and deliberately accepted the former in preference to the latter? Many of her less enterprising sisters, while condemning the open immorality, must have secretly envied the outlet for latent faculties and aspirations accorded to the courtesan; some among them, aware of similar potentialities within themselves, may even have considered the sheltered life of civic irresponsibility and stultifying subjection of body and mind a poor exchange for the freedom enjoyed by the *hetærae*. These, although supposed to have forfeited man's respect, certainly attracted his attention and commanded his interest, and had no difficulty in securing his society; nor did he seem to consider it beneath his dignity to seek their advice even on matters of state.

Pericles owed much of his eloquence to the inspirations of Aspasia. Socrates, great philosopher

as he was, although their friendship was what would now be called platonic, admitted his obligations towards Diotima. Beauty and external charm may have been the initial cause of the attraction, but these transient advantages owed their persistent vitality to the cultivation of talent and intellect; much as men may have inveighed through all ages against the clever woman, it is she and not her more beautiful but less mentally endowed sister who has succeeded in preserving his interest and lasting affection.

Domesticity was the one great virtue expected of woman in ancient Greece, coupled with unswerving fidelity to a husband who in no way recognized an equal obligation. The wife lived in seclusion, spinning, bearing children, tending the sick of the household—a cipher from any other point of view. Her tastes were not consulted; the order of her life was taken for granted. Habitual reiteration had cemented the prejudice and self-interest of many generations into a universal opinion—that women were made to serve—that their ambitions were bounded by the four walls of a house—that outside those walls they did not count in a world where might, if it were not right, was at all events the only thing that mattered.

The money handed over on marriage by her father became the absolute property of the husband; the transaction was of as mercenary a nature as the bartering of cattle. She was practically a servant without salary, without rights, privilege, or

power of appeal. This was the position to which man in his one-pointed aim at individualization had relegated her; it never even occurred to him that all women are not born housekeepers, any more than all men are born soldiers! The respectable wife in Greece was expected to live her life without education, without male society, bringing with it the educative influence of the point of view of the opposite sex, except that of her nearest relatives of which—in spite of all the rules for wifely conduct ever invented—she possibly tired; without any interests beyond the walls of her husband's house. Could there be environment more narrowing, more restricting, more deadening to the qualities of mind and broadness of outlook expected from, and demanded by, the woman of to-day?

She seldom went out; her chief companions were her own slaves. Petty details of household economy, care that everything was in its proper place, her husband's creature comforts the only points in which she was expected to interest herself, the be-all and end-all of her existence; and this is an age when Sappho, the courtesan Aspasia, Diotima, and a few others who found opportunity, were proving to the world of what woman's brain was capable!

To many, then as now, this limited field of thought and action was possibly all they asked; among men also there will always be a vast number fit only to be hewers of wood and drawers of water. The lack of education kept women on a level where cir-

cumstances militated against intellectual advance rather than assisted it. Consciously or unconsciously man felt that in woman's ignorance lay the source of his authority ; he has always encouraged a prejudice against the highly-educated woman. I have myself heard men not so long ago deplore the increase of education in England as unfitting the working man for the humbler offices of life ! This applied even more pointedly to the opposite sex ; if woman's field of interests were allowed to widen, if the wings of her ambition and aspirations were not kept clipped, man's authority and the comfort of his home might suffer, while she soared to heights he had reserved for himself !

If the age could produce an Aspasia it is only reasonable to suppose that the paucity of notable women during the epoch of ancient Greek civilization was due to this limitation of environment and the prejudices of their generation rather than to the incapacity of their brains. It was very convenient to assert, as Thucydides asserted, that to live and die unremarked for good or evil should fill the cup of woman's content—and to take for granted that it was so. Woman then, as in Victorian days, smiled a sphinx-like smile, and said nothing. But within the secluded walls that constituted her world in old Greece we may be sure there was many a soul eager for expansion, conscious of hidden fires, rebellious at the injustice, and yet mute and hopeless of redress ; souls consumed with the fret of suppressed energies, resulting in either caprice, unrest and ill-temper,

or the patience and power of self-control, that, handed down through the intervening ages, should prove a valuable asset to her daughter of to-day. The opinion that biologists hold that acquired qualities cannot be transmitted will be dealt with in a later chapter.

There were channels besides the repression of forces purely dynamic through which women have learned to suffer in a silence that was certainly not that of ready acquiescence.

Although monogamy became the general practice during the earlier part of the Grecian civilization, it was a monogamy in name only. A step in the right direction assuredly, as implying the raising of a higher standard, an acknowledgement of the desirability of self-control which is the real essence of civilization ; but in practice it fell far short of its professions. While from women was expected the most impeccable fidelity to one man, men were permitted almost infinite licence ; the wife had no redress, and a right of complaint that was purely theoretical. Curiously enough, in the earlier period, when moral standards might have been supposed to be less rigid than in the more advanced stages of civilization, the opposite seems to have been the case ; perhaps because in the earlier degrees of evolution, when human psychology was less complex, there was a simpler conception of right and wrong, leaving to a more advanced generation the subtle casuistry that will prove black to be white.

Whether polygamy or monogamy should be the

prevailing system, the opinion and feelings of woman have never been consulted. Whatever the decision of man, the law-maker, there was no alternative for her but to acquiesce, and in that acquiescence man has chosen to read content. But is it likely, is it conceivable, that with the self-respecting, the mentally endowed, and above all, the loving woman, acquiescence could ever have been anything but an outward form, a rigid repression of fermenting resentment at circumstances that were too strong for her ?

Woman's emotions are as human as man's ; with her, the tortures of jealousy and anguish caused by the inconstancy of another can be equally poignant ; that the inconstancy should be legalized is no consolation but added insult. Man moreover, with the sympathy of his whole sex on his side, could find a certain appeasement of his sufferings by revenging himself on his successful rival. Woman had no such outlet. The agony of watching day by day the love that had been hers drift into the keeping of another had to be borne in silence ; the sin against her was legalized or tacitly sanctioned and she had no redress. Under the system of polygamy it might even have been part of her duty to prepare for the reception of her supplanter—a refinement of cruelty that in many instances must surely have been inflicted through ignorance and lack of imagination on the part of the man, rather than callous indifference.

She acquiesced because no other course was open.

She would assuredly have protested if the protest would have carried any weight, but she had to suffer silently what men refused to suffer at all—the poignant stab of impotent jealousy ; she had to accustom herself to indifference, without complaint, from the being upon whom she had lavished all her love. Even where real love was not involved the incident brought with it inevitably humiliation and bitter resentment.

Here again the need for self-control and self-effacement is evident, weaving a thread into the fabric of womanhood which must have left its mark upon succeeding generations, and strengthened the quality of its fibre. From the cave-woman to the present “ heiress of all the ages,” the potential and living passion of jealousy in women has never been, and cannot be, denied. Man has not even attempted to argue that to be supplanted by a rival in his affection and honour is a pleasant experience, although he may—and does—assert that women enjoy self-sacrifice ! But in dealing with the jealousies of the opposite sex he has generally treated the subject either with impatience or levity. His own jealousies have been regarded as much more worthy of consideration, and from the purely material standpoint—the only standpoint at the beginnings of civilization—perhaps he was right. Neither duels, assassinations, nor intemperate recrimination followed as a rule in the wake of the victory of a rival to a wife’s prerogative ; although possibly quite justified, jealousy on the part of a woman was

negligible ; she was not in a position to make it felt. On the comparatively rare occasions when this was not the case, no one can accuse her of not having made the most of her opportunity ! She has proved that jealousy, so often kept under control through force of circumstance, can be as violently excited in woman as in any member of the opposite sex. But the unwritten law in which from the beginning of the race man has found justification turned a deaf ear to the woman ; there were no extenuating circumstances for her !

And yet, the primitive woman's jealousy was not only an essentially human quality ; there was inherent in it the instinct for self-preservation, lacking in the man's.

For to her, the appearance of a rival in the field was the beginning of the end, so far as she was concerned—the end possibly including some unpleasant form of death. In resisting the incursion of so dangerous an enemy, vindictiveness towards her supplanter was a natural outcome ; she had to fight for her own, single-handed ; subterfuge, flattery, strategy in any form, admissible or inadmissible, the only weapons in the fight against might she had to her hand. Is it astonishing that she gradually developed a surprisingly intimate comprehension of man's moods, that her inherent powers of intuition—of “sensing” certain psychological conditions, should have become more acute, her brain more perceptive of trifling signs and indications ? To be versed in the art of pleasing meant life to her—she

studied it unconsciously and consciously, assimilating knowledge, divining secrets, learning to play with unerring skill on the strings of the less complex masculine mind ; handing down to her daughter crude instructions when she left the paternal cave for that of her husband, rough hints on the management of husbands which she herself had learnt whether her matrimonial experiences had been bitter or sweet—hints which the mother of to-day hands on, altered perhaps in form, but essentially the same in nature. The cave-woman soon learnt that if she made herself disagreeable, and failed to please her husband, he could console himself by going off to whatever represented his club in that day, and find his pleasure with his fellowman. She could judge to a nicety by almost indefinable trifles when he returned home at night whether he had been lucky in the day's sport ; or if games of skill had been his object whether—metaphorically speaking—he had been missing his short putts. On such ill-omened occasions she refrained from asking tactless questions, and found it was safer to relegate a baby who never could be counted on not to cry, to some inconspicuous corner, and to prepare food—of the best—as rapidly and silently as possible.

Having no club of her own to go to—one can understand the little favour women's clubs first found with the opposite sex—on these stormy days, she knew she just had to make the best of it ; dodging the knuckle-bone left over from dinner as it flew past her head on its way to the probably

howling baby in the corner. She learnt to know exactly the interval between the breaking of the storm and the dispatch of the knuckle-bone, and what particularly succulent form of viand might possibly eliminate the knuckle-bone practice altogether. In the more peaceful, smooth-tempered intervals when, the tension of her nerves relieved, she broke into song, danced the baby, and covered it with intemperate kisses, the man no doubt wondered why, and thanked his Totem he belonged to a sex so much less emotional—forgetting that emotion can be expressed through knuckle-bones as eloquently as through tears !

In her grievances she had the rough sympathy of other primitive women, all suffering under the same yoke, and the moral support must have counted for something although in the fight for her own she may have been foredoomed to defeat. Behind the antagonism aroused by the potentiality of rivalry from other women there has always been an under-current of loyalty, of freemasonry among the sex ; a tacit bond of union in face of a common enemy ; just as men hang together, making a common cause where sex questions arise, abiding by standards in the main artificial, that justify the masculine attitude. This tacit sympathy, this bond of union between women is for the most part unacknowledged, unappreciated even, among the less intelligent, but nevertheless, it is there. Women stand by one another in many ways ; they guard the secrets of their freemasonry—the “ things that every woman

knows"—far more jealously than the other sex might imagine; that an exasperated male should have described woman as a "sphinx without a secret," is the supreme tribute to her powers of reticence! The story of Leæna the Greek courtesan who allowed herself to be tortured to death rather than betray her friend is an example, appreciated by the Athenians of her day, of woman's power to keep a secret.

In times when the race was first putting out feelers towards individualization and might was acknowledged to be right, the sense of injustice with its natural resentment was probably not so strong in woman's mind, as the merely primitive instincts of jealous love, and the realization of the issues so vital to her well-being, consequent on the usurpation of her privileges by another. Evolution, busy with the physical aspect, was bringing into being a world of matter, preparing the vehicles for the more subtle manifestations of spirit later on. The world at that period was for the strong arm, the taut sinew, the swift foot; the fact was obvious, there was no gainsaying it. The fault for the injustices suffered by the weak was laid on the shoulders of whatever Deity there might be. It was in the order of things; man was not to blame. In his first strenuous efforts towards individualization it was right he should take what he could and hold it, should strain after the full development of the link between his consciousness and matter—his body, and perfect the control of limb, quickness of eye, powers of nerve and muscle. His goals were material,

his standards made to fit them. The weakest had to go to the wall ; the fittest only survived. Women must have perforce admitted so much as a fact patent to all who chose to read it in the scheme of nature.

But as the race evolved, and ethical ideals supplanted those standards, woman began to ask questions. The drama of Queen Vashti tells us so much. By the time the world arrived at the later Greek civilization, she was not only asking questions but beginning to clamour for answers. The passion for self-evolution was stirring within her. Qualities other than mere muscular supremacy were assuming some value, qualities which she knew to be inherent in herself, not only in the male, and which cried out for expression. She had been told so long that hers was the inferior sex, and so persistently, she had almost come to believe it ; the yoke of subjection had left its mark. The very fact that man had assumed the part of the hunter, delegating to her the less exciting rôle of arranging for his comfort when he came home, had prevented her from developing the more enterprising side of her inherent characteristics. But she was developing other qualities ; by the time civilization was beginning to leave barbarism behind, her powers of intuition, adaptability, insight into the psychology of man, and the ability to play upon it, all vital weapons in her defences, had become a source of power and influence that counted. Moreover, though unconsciously developed through force of circumstances, by the

time Athens stood for all that was worth while in art and learning, she was becoming actively aware of her potentialities of mind and intellect, and beginning consciously to strive against the smothering influences that prevented their fruition. Hence we get that curious type, the Grecian *hetæra*, already mentioned as representing the intellectuality of her sex, and through that intellectuality, forcing her way into a recognition from the greatest thinkers of her age. Women with any powers of mentality had drawn conclusions; they asked why, while respectability regarded her with scorn for her want of morality, and men held her up to their wives as a warning, so far from paying any penalty for her irregular mode of life, she seemed to enjoy the society of most of the women worth knowing—and all the men!

It is hardly a cause for wonder that the husbands of Greece kept their wives out of temptation within the four walls of their own homes, ignorant in the main of events outside. The example of the courtesans with their literary societies and opportunities for intellectual intercourse would have doubtless had a pernicious effect on the meek, submissive spirit that was so admirable in woman! The Greek male, in the vernacular of to-day, was taking no chances!—in his heart perhaps doubting whether the rewards of virtue would prove to have sufficient weight against the superior lures of vice.

CHAPTER IV

UNDER THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Although the Roman Empire claimed to be more advanced in its attitude towards women than the Grecian which it supplanted, in the early days of its supremacy we still find the sex regarded from what may be called the purely utilitarian standpoint. Matrimonial fidelity on the woman's part was exalted into so lofty a supremacy that other virtues seem to have assumed a position of comparative unimportance. Conventional opinion had been guided into grooves so deeply graven by man-made legislation, with its insistence upon the inferiority of the other sex, that verbal protest would have fallen on sterile soil. The great mass of women, kept in ignorance, given no opportunities for education, taught from childhood to regard man as the superior from whom there was no appeal, were forced to possess their souls in patience ; they were allowed no opinions of their own, and the less thought they gave to existing conditions, the less logic they brought to bear in their own defence, the less they permitted the sense of repression to rankle, the more contented they were likely to be. They were taught by their husbands that in chastity lay their supreme

standard of honour ; no more was expected of them. There are men even in the present day still sufficiently tainted with the old leaven of barbarism, the primitive instinct of the male, who consider that in this lies the sum total of a woman's "honour."

But the Roman Empire has to its credit the universal substitution of monogamy for polygamy ; through its example it became the prevailing system throughout all civilized countries. It is true that, as in the case of Greece, it was a monogamy in name only, but the very acknowledgment that it presented a higher standard of life showed a tendency to place woman upon a less despicable level. The indescribable humiliations and insults of polygamy were spared her ; she had henceforth an acknowledged right to resent the intrusions of rivals, although, so great was the licence still permitted to the man, the resentment was likely to prove barren of more than surface results.

Her position as a citizen remained as negligible as ever ; she had no civic rights or privileges, no advantages educationally nor as an individual. The war of the spirit within her must have still waged with the limitations without. Her subjection to the man was absolute ; he had in his hands, not only the ordering of her life, but in some circumstances the right of putting her to death. The early Roman accused his Greek predecessors of enslaving their wives, but the accusation appears to have been based on the meagre fact that while the Greek wife was kept secluded and apart from

society outside her home, the Roman accompanied her husband to feasts and spectacular displays ; so far as opportunities for mental development were concerned, the previous civilization seems to have been the more advanced. The women of the early Roman Empire do not appear to have had even the advantages of the *hetærae*, domesticity being for the moment the national fetish.

That the woman herself was not so contented under this regime as it has suited her chroniclers to suppose, can be gathered from the story related by Livy of a far-spread plot among Roman women to poison their husbands ! The mere rumour of such a scheme hardly points to a contented acquiescence in their state of subjection ! Even though the story of such a conspiracy be over-coloured, to the feeling of the day, engendered by pent-up cravings for a greater liberty, the fire must be attributed that could result in the smoke of so lurid a rumour. Women do not wish to poison their husbands for nothing ; even the militant suffragette of our own day did not go to such lengths in her protestations against the *status quo* ; the Princes of Persia were apparently wise in their generation when they clamoured for prompt action in the matter of feminine rebellion ! That a temple should have been erected for the special purpose of prayers for the appeasement of husbands is a sidelight on the attitude of the day ; the yoke of Eve's Curse must have been galling the shoulders of her daughters. No doubt the majority of matrons knew how to manage their

husbands without the help of any goddess, but in desperate cases where body and soul were the chattels of the men who legally owned them, supplications to presumably sympathetic ears may have afforded a certain relief. Even the exchange of grievances with fellow-suplicants may have proved a safety-valve, and thereby contributed to subsequent domestic peace. One wonders if the necessary votive offerings were filched from household supplies, entailing a discreet manipulation of accounts before their presentation to the domestic despot.

With such conditions prevailing, that a Roman jurisconsult should have defined marriage as a lifelong fellowship of all divine and human rights¹ was surely a flight in sarcasm, or prompted by the one-sided outlook towards which the Conventional thought of many generations had tended ?

Through these early days of Roman civilization we get no hint of intellectual achievement on woman's part. In so hopelessly stultifying an environment what could be expected ? She was learning patience, self-abnegation, the strict performance of duties in many cases irksome, obedience possibly to a man whom in her heart she despised, aware within herself of finer aspirations, wider potentialities than he possessed ; and in less commendable instances, she was growing bitter under obvious injustice, capricious and deceitful.

Above all, she was learning to turn her eyes

¹ *History of European Morals.* Lecky.

upwards, to a better world, a world where she might find fulfilment, and the expansion of consciousness denied to her in this. Women as a body have been acknowledged to be more conscious of, more interested in, a future world than men—have in fact been considered more what is generally called “religious”; the truth being that this world has brought much less to them than to the opposite sex.

There is an old saying to the effect that men expect less of the world and get more; women expect more and get less. It may possibly be a world of disillusionment to most men; it is certainly a world of disillusionment to all women. The ignorance of extreme youth is more marked, knowledge of the world less attainable to them. The dreams of a girl are made of lightest gossamer, her ideals ride on clouds across the vault of Heaven, she stretches out her arms to life with all the confidence of ignorance. The awakening can be terrible. Have men ever considered what that sudden enlightenment brings? The realization that she, willing and eager to give her all, will not get all in exchange; that the world is what it is, and she must just make the best of it. What wonder her eyes should travel on, scanning horizons for the loom of a land where shattered illusions may be put together again?

But as the Roman civilization advanced the position of women improved considerably. The progress was made in an age rich with instances of women’s devotion and self-sacrifice, and it would be

interesting to know whether the finest in man was beginning to recognize the power of the force that has been, and will be, the greatest in the world—love.

We find Paulina, wife of Seneca, eager to die with him, when at the Emperor Nero's command he opened his veins in order to bleed to death. That she was eventually forcibly saved from her own act, and may have returned to the joys of a world she had attempted to quit, in no way dims the halo of her devotion. It is said that her fellow-citizens for ever after looked with respect upon the unnatural pallor consequent on her act.

The wife of Brutus was an example of devotion and physical courage that must have had its effect on popular opinion ; she has left a reputation for wisdom, a knowledge of contemporary philosophical thought and wifely tenderness that would be an ornament to any age. Wishing to prove herself worthy of her husband's confidence no less than his love, she wounded herself in the thigh with a sharp weapon to prove her own courage. Brutus himself was astonished at the fortitude of the act ; probably nothing short of this rather crude exhibition of voluntary mutilation would have effected her purpose, in an age when mere physical courage stood for so much, and gladiatorial display was the type of entertainment that appealed to the public taste. Brutus, to show his confidence in her, told her the secret of the conspiracy against the life of Julius Cæsar. At her husband's death, all other

means having been removed from her, she put an end to her own life by swallowing burning coals.

When Poetus was condemned to commit suicide, his wife Arria courageously set him an example, indifferent to her own pain in the desire to mitigate his ; plunging a dagger into her breast, she assured him it did not hurt, with her dying breath.

Perhaps the finest act of devotion was that of Scipio's wife, as the pain she so unflinchingly faced was emotional rather than physical. Finding the husband to whom she was devotedly attached had fallen victim to the charms of one of his slaves, she suffered the blow to her own happiness in silence, and at his death gave the woman her freedom. Could magnanimity go further ?

These are but a few examples, proving the heights of generosity, courage, and self-sacrifice to which the heart of a woman can soar ; she was making slow but certain advance towards the goal of individualization, of ceasing to be the shadow of another, of winning recognition from man as a co-citizen, with rights.

With increase of opportunity her intellectual position began also to improve, resulting in a change of environment that in its turn had its reactions. Complete subjection to the male had apparently not proved so eminently satisfactory a state of affairs as its promoters had expected, if we are to judge by the complaint of Metellus Numidicus on the subject of wives.

"If, Romans," he said, "we could be without

wives, we should all keep free from that source of trouble ; but since nature has ordained that men can neither live sufficiently agreeably with wives, nor at all without them, let us consider the perpetual endurance of our race, rather than our own brief enjoyment."

Metellus Numidicus, evidently not "master in his own house," failed to consider the reverse side of the shield as expressed not long ago by a modern young woman weighing the alleged advantage of matrimony. "Besides the cares of a probably refractory household, and the anxieties of bringing up a family of young children," she said, "there is added the ineffable nuisance of a husband !" But in the days of Metellus Numidicus, woman had not found her voice !

In studying the history of the vicissitudes of women's position in the state during the later stages of the Roman Empire, one surmises that the increased corruption and laxity of the general standards of morality, with a growing distaste on the part of both sexes for the strict domesticity that had been Rome's ideal, gave woman a chance for a further bid for freedom. Again, as in the previous civilization, the comparative emancipation of the courtesan presented possibilities of independence of thought and action so alluring that it was considered advisable to pass a law forbidding the daughters of noble houses to enrol themselves in the irregular profession.

Marriage in honourable and less honourable forms

appears to have passed through changes that can only be described as revolutionary while the position of woman, both socially and legally, assumed a new aspect. During the latter part of the Roman civilization she became practically independent and must have consequently been able to exercise a certain influence on the conditions around her. The fact that she was now able—even as a married woman—to hold property in her own right, responsible to no one for its administration or disposal, emancipated her from the yoke of submission to either husband or father; she was no longer at the complete disposal of either, enjoying a dignity and freedom to develop her mentality and other powers never before experienced in the annals of her sex, and again, as in the case of Ahasuerus, man became alarmed. In spite of protest from the more enlightened among them, the law was repealed.

But no doubt it had had its effect on the trend of public opinion. The alarm exhibited by the male members of the community resulting in the repeal of the law relating to woman's property in her own right, shows that she had made good use of her opportunities; her progress towards individualization was making itself felt, one of the evidences of which was the improvement in the standard of morality with regard to the married state. It was not only during the Greek civilization that women showed a bitter resentment at the injustice and indignity of a one-sided fidelity, and in Rome through the independent possession of property

they were able to back protest with action. Men were at last forced to listen, with the result that the foremost thinkers of the day began to advocate a real mutual fidelity obligatory on both partners in the marriage contract ; not a mere sham enforced only on the wife. As an improvement in the standard of opinion is a first step towards more enlightened practice, this pronouncement, although by no means universally followed, must be considered an advance in the respect shown towards and claimed by womanhood. To profess high standards and fall short of them is surely better than to place them on a conveniently low level and then take credit for living up to them !

That women attained an exalted and independent position during the later Roman Empire and then lost it, has been brought forward as evidence that when tested they were found wanting. But the repeal of the woman's property law, urged by reason of the candid alarm of the opposite sex, surely points the other way ?

Woman with the change in her environment, the power and greater freedom that money always brings, and the widening of the field of her interests, had proved herself dangerous not only to man's assumption of superiority but to his convenience. Her wings were clipped not because she could not fly, but because she could fly too far. The only way to keep her within the bounds that man had hitherto assigned to her was to reimpose the limitations of her environment. So long as she could

own nothing, her influence in civic and moral affairs was negligible ; her only road to comparative independence with opportunity for self-development lay in joining the ranks of the courtesans who earned their own living.

In the later years of the Roman Empire no less than during the halcyon times of Greece, woman, given opportunity, proved her capability to take part in affairs of state and rise to great heights of intellectual attainment. No one reading the story of Zenobia can deny the inherent qualities that must have formed the foundation for so brilliant a career.

Wife of Odænathus, Prince of Palmyra, she found the outlet for her great gifts in the long absences of her husband, during which the reins of government fell into her hands ; she administered it with judgment and firmness, acquiring a reputation for clemency, economy, power of organization and of physical endurance at a time when—except in Sparta, where gymnastics had been practised by women as well as men—the ordinary routine of feminine occupations did nothing towards development of the physical side.

Zenobia was one of the most striking figures in ancient history. Her husband is said to have owed the greater part of his success to her, not only through the wisdom of her advice and intuition, but also through the active part she took in the affairs of state and military organization. The establishment of her dynasty in Rome was mainly

due to her, no less than the conquest of Egypt, which was achieved under her direction.

An outstanding personality she appears to have been in contemporary history; of great beauty and commanding manners, ruling her camps of rough soldiers on the field of action and enforcing discipline with unfailing success. In spite of her activities in government, and in military enterprise, she found time to cultivate her mental accomplishments to an unusual extent, could speak several languages, and was a serious student of both Eastern and Western history.

Even her enemies admitted the wonderful extent of her capacity and the marked influence of her strong personality, and Aurelian her conqueror, when he finally expelled the dynasty from Rome, found his own experience and military skill taxed to their utmost by her foresight and indomitable courage. She was not spared, however, the humiliation of figuring in his triumph, but was granted by him the privilege of ending her days in peaceful seclusion in a villa not far from Rome.

Had Zenobia been born a member of some ordinary patrician Roman family, and married into another, with these capabilities checked that she proved herself to have possessed, her taste for intellectual pursuits thwarted, and her field for active manifestation of her powers limited, condemned to be the submissive shadow of husband or father all her life, would it be unreasonable to visualize her as a discontented, nervous, capricious

woman, consumed by the inner fires of desires and aspirations that could never come to fruition, filled with vague longings for she knew not what, uncertain of temper, unhappy herself and making those near to her unhappy by the surge of her own restlessness ? Any family afflicted with such a firebrand would deserve our sympathy !

On the other hand, the qualities with which history credits her are of so fine a web, that the fabric woven from them would probably have withstood any strain put upon it by circumstance. Her wisdom, justice, command over men, and dignity in adversity were so universally admitted that limitation of environment in her case would in all probability have resulted in the development of such characteristics as patience, adaptability, control of the self under the urge of caprice or passion, and the forcible stifling of resentment at the gall of subjection's yoke, the result being a noble personality certainly, but at a price known only to the woman herself.

Wherever we find relaxation in the conventions relating to the cramping environment of women, instances arise, proving the latent potentialities of the sex ; and if those potentialities be transmuted—in one instance only—into active manifestation, limitation on the basis of sex is put out of court ; if the qualities such as were exhibited by Zenobia can be inherent in one woman, they can be inherent in all so far as the mere question of sex is concerned. And, as has been shown, Zenobia was by no means

the only instance of woman's adequate equipment for a part in civic affairs, or for the pursuit of science and philosophy. In the case of Zenobia, her military knowledge and skill in the handling of armies was certainly as great if not greater than that of her husband, an unusual addition to even the most advanced curriculum of female accomplishment.

Eudisia, eventually wife of the Emperor Theodosius II, was another example. She was taught science and the philosophy of the day by her father, and became so proficient that at his death he left all his property to be divided between his two sons, considering her beauty and knowledge sufficient provision for her future. She resented the injustice and took her case to Constantinople, and by her subsequent action in marrying the Emperor Theodosius seems to have justified her father's conclusions !

Deprived of the advantages of education and of the right to hold any property independently, woman naturally was a mere chattel, and this at the end of the Roman Empire, although previous civilizations had risen and fallen, was still her position. But the dawn of man's realization of its injustice was beginning ; higher standards, although not followed by general practice, had been raised ; customs that had been flaunted out in the open had become shameful—practised no doubt, and by the majority, but glossed over, hidden from the public eye ; hypocritical, perhaps, but a sign

of grace in so far as the shame of it was for the first time apparent.

It may be remarked that the fall of the Roman civilization took place after the *repeal* of the laws in favour of women, and was not, therefore, as is sometimes stated, a consequence of her greater independence.

CHAPTER V

MODESTY AND ASCETICISM

During the later days of the Roman Empire a strenuous war between Virtue and Vice in their most elementary forms seems to have been waged. The advocates of Christianity, not pointing as might have been supposed towards improvement in the status of woman from the civic or intellectual standpoint, were inclined to weigh her merits from that of morality only—chastity and modesty in superlative degree in the scales against Vice in its most revolting forms.

Men professed to accord respect or withhold it, not because of any individual qualities or acknowledgment of equality with themselves, but purely on a basis of morality; she stood or fell merely as representing in her life and personality, virtue or vice.

To speak frankly in dealing with the mind of a woman, this is a superficial form of respect for which she has—in the language of to-day—very little use. The respect so emphatically expressed at this time by the male population of Rome was mere lip-service, obviously prompted by self-interest; a man professed admiration for fidelity in his neighbour's wife because he hoped for it in his

own. Had it been a respect worthy the name and therefore of any real value, men would have reciprocated the fidelity exacted from their wives, instead of submitting them to the indignity of divided possession. It was the age-long story of calling woman a goddess and treating her as a slave ; and it is a code of ethics that has always been resented by women, as having no logical justification. Her attitude to-day proves so much. In spite of long-established conventions there were even in the later period of the Roman Empire among the foremost thinkers—as Aristotle had maintained in his day—¹ men who openly maintained that an equal fidelity on the part of husbands and wives was the only justifiable position in marriage, and that no man had the right to ask from his wife more than he was prepared to give.

Possibly such asseveration from men in positions of acknowledged intellectual supremacy may have carried weight, for there is no doubt the trend of public opinion showed signs of a change. Reciprocity in observance of the marriage contract became the prevailing fashion, and in the swing of the pendulum an almost exaggerated estimation of chastity in both men and women for its own sake was the result ; partly due no doubt to the leaning towards extreme asceticism of the Christian Church. But woman was still not regarded as an individual with civic or other rights ; she became either a means to salvation through abstinence from inter-

¹ *History of European Morals.* Lecky.

course with her, or on the other hand an instrument of the devil leading to destruction !

Modesty in woman was exalted almost to the level of a fetish, a virtue beyond all others, and instances were cited, true and legendary, of obedience to this instinct even in moments of extreme danger.

Such was the story of St. Perpetua, who, when flung half-dead from the horns of a bull into the arena, drew her dress round her as she fell, to shield her limbs from the inquisitive gaze of the spectators. This, as every woman would agree, may well have been true, for so deeply implanted is the impulse in civilized woman, that it would come under the head of a secondary reflex action of the brain, and be almost automatic.

And this raises a very interesting question.

Is modesty in woman an instinct ? Is it not rather a product of persistent training from the very earliest years of childhood—an artificial impulse born of the demands of civilization ? In its essence it is unstable, its foundations built upon a code, rather than an ethical standard. What is modesty in one generation is not necessarily modesty in the next ; and being relative can hardly owe so much of its persistence to heredity, as qualities based upon invariable principles.

Man has presumed that in the best type of woman modesty is an inherent quality, manifesting spontaneously as a result of her sex, but surely the assumption is without grounds and calculated to

do harm ? It is inculcated from so early an age that the child herself has no recollection of its beginnings, and eventually it becomes one of the most infallible instincts of woman's nature in degrees relative to its particular period in history. But the child in the nursery is both ignorant and innocent of any reason for it, and has in its natural state no real sense of modesty at all ; any nurse or mother knows as much.

Consequently, as an artificial product, it can be more easily destroyed than if rooted in nature's own constituents, and modesty is womanhood's first line of defence, although she herself may not be aware of it. There is no first step that counts for more, than a breach in the immaculate walls of a woman's modesty. The poignant suffering of the first encroachment upon it stands sentinel between her and dangers that may be unknown to her, and men should be very careful of legislation that tends to weaken or break down these defences.

The case cited in Roman history of a sister of one of the saints, who endured the agony of cancer in the breast unalleviated rather than permit the doctor to see it—although in this age we should say it was carrying modesty too far—is an example of the shrinking of a young woman from a violation of the instincts resultant on early training ; the same instinctive protest at even permissible invasion, is woman's best safeguard to-day—a fact to be remembered in any legislation connected with the examination of girls in elementary schools, or

otherwise. Modesty in woman is a sensitive growth, and once allowed to wilt can never be brought to life again.

That the standard can vary according to its generation is obvious from historical records and observation of passing events. But there are boundaries, between unlimited licence on the one hand, and prudery on the other, within which the pendulum swings in obedience to public opinion. The fashions of one generation are possibly called indecent by the generation preceding it, or it may be the other way ; the early Victorians condemned the modes of the Empire, which left little to the imagination and was extreme in its scantiness of attire. The fashions of to-day might make the Empire blush. The crinoline age was shocked at the clinging skirts that followed it. Among savages an adornment of beads may satisfy all requirements ; the standard is arbitrary.

No quality in the world is more relative than modesty, and an age that spoke of the story of Paul and Virginia with tears in its eyes, may be succeeded by one that holds it up to ridicule.

It is much the same in literature. Between the coarseness of the eighteenth-century writers and the writers of to-day who frankly call a spade a spade, a generation flourished whose great anxiety was to avoid and ignore spades ; they even called things by that name, which were not spades at all. The women trailed skirts in the dust in their efforts to hide the fact that they had two legs ; even the

violets followed the prevailing fashion, hiding among their leaves, and earning for themselves a character for modesty, forfeited by the long-stalked, boldly-uplifted heads of their posterity to-day !

But behind all the fluctuations of accepted standards of outward observance, there lies always in every true woman a line of demarcation beyond which it is forbidden to penetrate. Those old Romans knew what they were about from their own point of view, when they glorified modesty in woman until it almost reached the edge of fanaticism.

But it did nothing to advance the civic or individual status of woman. On the contrary, from having been regarded through bygone ages as a means of indulgence, under the new asceticism she became a snare ; at either point of view she would hardly have been unreasonable in feeling resentment.

Her position, moreover, in these last days of Roman supremacy, even as wife or mother, became depreciated ; asceticism in belauding its own merits relegated the status of matrimony to its coarsest and lowest interpretation, ignoring the inner, spiritual union of heart and mind, and the undoubted influence for good exercised by the woman, whose price even the Jews had proclaimed to be above rubies.

As in the old legend with its undercurrent of significance Adam attributed his misfortunes to Eve, the men of Rome pronounced woman to be the root of all evil. The Greeks had shown them an example ; it was Pandora who opened the box

and let loose all the ills to which flesh and human consciousness is heir. It should be remembered that on realizing the stupendous consequences of her act she might well have lost her head and closed the lid before Hope at the bottom escaped ; and as hope is the main factor that keeps the world going, we owe her some measure of gratitude for the gift that mitigated the results of her indiscretion.

Invective against woman reached grotesque heights, and any further advance in the evolution of her individuality was checked for the time being. The leaders of the reaction towards asceticism were ludicrous in the extravagance of their vituperation. She was a wile of the devil, a pitfall for man's undoing ; she should be ashamed of her form, her beauty, her motherhood, her very existence. She was an excrescence on nature, a device for the pollution of humanity ! Fortunately, through long centuries of conscious and unconscious observation, and an intimate knowledge of his moods, women had learnt to regard the fulminations of the male as not necessarily the last words in wisdom, or they must certainly under such strictures have committed suicide in a body !

Perhaps they had the wit to probe one step deeper into causes and their results, consoling themselves with the reflection, that were it not for men's passions, women would not be a snare. Also, that men's moods were transient, that an Eveless Eden would prove unsatisfying, and that for the inevitable reaction they had only to bide their time.

But to be regarded in the light of either snare or guerdon from the physical point of view must have been equally humiliating to a sex that could produce a Zenobia, Sappho, Hypatia, Cornelia, and many other equally notable personalities ; many fires must have smouldered, only waiting a chance to break into open flame ; the sweets of a dawning emancipation having been almost within reach, made its surrender the more bitter. The misgivings of the Princes of Persia, and in the later civilization, of the Athenians, reawakened in their Roman successors ; the limitations imposed on women through their environment once removed, man's alleged superiority trembled in the balance !

So the repeal of laws began to take place, through which women had acquired certain rights and privileges. They were again deprived of all recognition as citizens and owners of property ; rights of succession were denied them, independence of action, opportunities of expression with regard to matters connected with their sex ; in fact, of all the improvement in status to which they had laboriously attained. Once more woman found her foot on the lowest rung of the ladder leading to self-development and true emancipation. In the eyes of the law she re-assumed a position of acknowledged inferiority, her recognition as an individual negligible. The upward struggle, with all its galling limitations and disabilities, had to begin again.

But among the thorns and stony places of the road she had travelled there had been seeds sown

of self-sacrifice, devotion, and a great patience, which were bound, though centuries should intervene, to come to harvest.

For the time being, and as Rome as a world-force came to an end, the mantle of woman's freedom seems to have fallen from the shoulders of civilization, on to those of barbarism. Christianity, we must reluctantly admit, as preached by the Churches, far from militating towards the emancipation and equality of women, threw its influence into the opposite scale. St. Paul insists on the inferiority of the female sex, no less than St. Peter. That the latter's may possibly be a biased view is acknowledged with unconscious irony in our modern marriage service, where St. Peter's exhortation to wifely submission contains the interpolation "being himself a married man" !

But although the Christian Church insisted on the inferiority of women, agreeing apparently with the saying of the Eastern sage, "Day and night must women be held in a state of dependence," they owed many improvements in their position to the Christian Emperors. Justinian embraced their cause and held the larger view of their position. Constantine also removed some of their disqualifications. The interests of working women were advanced, although more as the protection of an inferior order of beings than a measure of justice. But the Church continued to look upon woman's independence with disfavour, obedience to her husband being strenuously upheld by the Canon

law ; although St. Augustine considered the law unjust which precluded a woman from inheriting her husband's property. They were also excluded from any sort of office in the Church, although in the ancient religious ceremonies they had officiated as priestesses.

There is no doubt that Christianity during the first few centuries following the birth of its Founder did not assist woman in her journey towards self-expression, the leaning towards asceticism being, no doubt, a potent influence. This new development in man towards the attainment of his own salvation, absorbed his attention, blinding him to any interests but his own ; the sense of justice and generosity that had been waking in his consciousness and manifested in the privileges and rights granted to women up to the time of the Emperor Justinian, returned to the slumber from which it had been so laboriously aroused ; during the gradual decline of the Eastern and Western empire women were deprived of the rights of succession, of expression, of all civic recognition ; so far from the Empire having owed its fall to the ascendancy of the female sex, as some historians have asserted, woman had never been in a position of such inferiority and subjection both of body and soul—if it were conceded she had a soul!—as when the Empire was finally engulfed in the wave of so-called barbarism that overran Southern Europe.

Up to the present time history does not show that when women have acquired privileges, legis-

lative advantages, and opportunities for education, they have ever abused them ; nor is there any reason to suppose that in these days of their greater licence they will do so. Woman had learnt to give, to give with both hands, quite irrespective of anything she might get ; she was learning all through those days of limited outlet, of cramping conditions, to find self-expression in love, in selflessness, in the performance of duty towards others. She had, through the centuries that lay between her and her ancestress the cave-woman, been making the home into a sacred retreat, which man had learnt to love and to miss when it was not there. This was, perhaps, partly in self-defence—for doubtless there were diversions for the male in those early civilizations that hung as bogeys of counter-attractions before the eyes of the young wife then as now !—but it was a labour of love, and to those generations of priestesses at the altar of domesticity, woman owes her aptitude to-day. The art of making a real *home*, of arousing the home-instinct, has always been in the hands of woman ; its influence was mainly hers.

But although man in his craze for asceticism had reduced the other sex to the old conditions of absolute subjection, there was one privilege that left behind it certain effects beyond his control. Education, opportunities for development of mentality, for the exercise of reason, and the growth of critical observation, enjoyed to a more or less limited extent during the later days of Rome, had

implanted seeds and aroused protests that were bound to have results. Though the daughter may have been deprived of these rights, the educated mother who had enjoyed them handed the tradition of them down. Education had put weapons in woman's hand, with which in the centuries to come she could emphasize the protests that during the infancy of her evolution had been denied expression. She was better equipped for the struggle for justice and expansion of opportunity. There were traditions behind her, her dreams were more crystallized, she knew more definitely what she wanted.

And with this further quickening of her perceptions, in the initial stages of the feudal system which established itself in Europe, she was again forced to face the humiliations and poignant heart-burning of a return to polygamy. The conquerors of Gaul and the nobles in their train had a plurality of wives; Charlemagne himself had four. But Christianity in moderating its exaggerated worship of asceticism was beginning to exert an influence for good; immorality was sternly condemned, and conjugal fidelity upheld. Not that this resulted in any advance for woman towards emancipation; she was kept in strict subjection, had no legal rights, had resumed her position as a mere chattel, and any improvement in her position was conceded on the old basis of morality only; and a one-sided morality at that—for man again suited his own convenience, making laws, and establishing principles

that imposed penalties from which he remained exempt, putting forward casuistical excuses for an inequality of censure on the sexes with regard to infidelity, that have been handed down, and find ratification in the divorce laws to-day.

In an age when education was at a discount even among men, it is not surprising that the women were no better off. Display of prowess, of physical accomplishments, was the be-all and end-all of masculine interest. Tournament and joust, single combat, or encounters with enemies, fulfilled the absorbing aims of life, with his own prowess as keynote, and woman as reward. She was expected to sit at home and sew—into those acres of old hand-made tapestry how many tears of suppressed longing or frank boredom are woven?—and surrounded by her maidens—all probably equally bored—meekly awaited the homecoming of a lord, who, by frequent excursions into the world of adventure, took care never to be bored himself.

CHAPTER VI

LIMITATIONS OF ENVIRONMENT

Although in its technical sense polygamy became a thing of the past, during the feudal system, woman's inferiority from the theoretical and practical point of view was enforced more rigidly than ever.

She was still debarred by law from succession to property, and thereby deprived of the only source of any real independence of action; she had no status in law; her father, husband, or, in the absence of either, nearest male relative was the unquestioned arbiter of her fate; her judge and jury, the one supreme authority without whose consent all her dearest aspirations and desires were ineffectual. She was taught to believe her opinions were of no account, her intellect a trifle superior to that of a rabbit, her only duty to superintend the household—without salary—that ensured the material comfort of the man whose name she bore; and to give him children. If she were unfortunate enough to bear daughters instead of sons, repudiation by her husband—we may conclude on the score of having fallen short in her duty—often followed, especially where affairs of

succession to property were involved, and a supplanter became the last drop in the cup of her humiliation.

How could she, with all this against her, take herself seriously? In these more enlightened days—although the greater part of it has survived until quite lately—it seems almost to belong to comic opera, the real humour of the position lying in the fact that it was taken for granted she had nothing to complain of, and should find true contentment in her lot. She has certainly found a palliative in self-devotion, and in focussing her interests on those of others rather than her own, and in her mother-love; but even that, owing to inequality in law, was often embittered. Her children were the absolute property of the father. How could she even develop any sense of responsibility towards herself or life in general? Any responsibilities she may have assumed were in obedience to the natural urge of motherhood, not of legislation—unless the children were the result of an irregular union, in which case she was accorded undivided possession!

Her very standard of honour was adjudicated by man to be fulfilled in the observance of personal chastity; being of an inferior order of creation she was not expected to keep her word; she might disregard truth, or descend to any evasion of ethical law, because she was not included in man-made codes; but so long as she did not break the strict observance of physical chastity she

remained an "honest" woman! Even to-day, men have been heard to say the ostracism imposed upon a man for cheating at cards would not be imposed upon a woman, because, being of the inferior sex, so much is not expected of her!

The inequality of blame accorded respectively to the sexes in matters of infidelity has never ceased to fill woman with an impotent sense of injustice, as an insult to any sort of self-respect. What wonder if in an environment so discouraging and unstimulating her own standards should have shown a tendency to accommodate themselves to circumstances—that the constant friction with man's uncertain moods, forced submission to an arbitrary dictatorship, apprehension of a legalized supplanter in a husband's regard, should have developed into the less admirable methods of self-defence that in their execution are in themselves demoralizing?

Fortunately there is the other side of the shield. The whetstone that could sharpen the edge of such unenviable qualities as cajolery, dissimulation, and a cunning gauging of male psychology, could equally temper the more desirable attributes of patience, magnanimity, thought for others before self, and chivalry towards man's weaknesses. True women, whatever may have been the standards inaugurated by the opposite sex for their guidance, have made their own codes and tried to live up to them. The environment that in the one case tended to foster pettiness of outlook, uncertainty of temper, and—to man—incomprehensible caprice,

on the other hand was the soil in which self-control grew and flourished, evidence of a force that sooner or later must have its reaction.

When the wave of exaggerated asceticism had exhausted itself, the early Christian Church was instrumental in establishing the married state upon a basis calculated to improve the woman's position, from that aspect; but from that aspect only. In insisting on an inner, more spiritual interpretation of marriage, the union of soul as well as of body, and the beauty of a life-long fidelity, it discountenanced the habit of regarding it as either a purely mercenary arrangement between father and prospective husband, or the gratification of a passing impulse. So far certainly the step was in advance, and by the outward respect implied, the woman's self-respect was no doubt increased. But beyond that, for her as an individual unit in the scheme of creation the Church did nothing; neither in civic rights nor facilities for education did it advocate any step forward; and, as an alternative to the subjection of marriage, offered her the discipline of the convent. It was almost a disgrace for any female of good family to remain in the unmarried state, and the religious orders were looked upon, not only as a form of dedication to the service of God, but as a refuge when the conditions of life became unbearable, an escape from a distasteful marriage, or, in the severity of routine and physical discomfort, a means of expiation for sin. They were also convenient for the incarceration of

obstreperous females who, so far from suffering their limitations gladly, by open protest and active rebellion proved thorns in the flesh to the male who might be responsible for them. Except in rare instances, a man became monk by his free will only. How many hapless women have wept and sighed, forced into a life for which they had no vocation, and could only regard with horror and distaste? When, in the early days of the Middle Ages, leaving the vanished dreams of the Roman administration behind her, woman once more started on the road towards the expression of consciousness that is the aim of evolution, she did so under the same disabilities, the same active opposition, the same galling limitations and ineffectual protest of the old days of primitive paganism.

That such environment should have left an impress that might well prove indelible is easy to imagine. The tenacity of beliefs and sentiments inculcated during childhood is a well-known fact; the impressions received by an immature, malleable brain are exceedingly difficult to remove. This life-long retention of impressions received during childhood is observable in the bitter antagonisms displayed in—for instance—religious discussions. Half the most violent altercations in the world on divergence of opinion on the dogmas of religion are based, not on real knowledge and consequent acceptance of those dogmas, but on the fact that they are the dogmas the respective disputants have been taught to believe in from childhood

upwards. That anyone should dispute them is the real cause of offence in nine cases out of ten.

When every infant of female sex was taught its inferiority to the male as soon as it could receive impressions at all, when every habit and rule in the nursery was based upon this foregone conclusion, what wonder if women themselves took it as a matter of course—or, what is of more importance, acted as though they did? Even in the nursery there were pioneer souls who resented it! A cloud of prejudice and conventional opinion was the result, that became with the passing of succeeding generations very difficult to penetrate; the great mass of women, helpless in the grip of unequal legislation, were afraid to articulate their protests, anxious only to placate the sex that held them in bondage. The antipathy of that part of the community who would eventually benefit by their efforts has always been one of the obstacles in the path of pioneers during the earlier stages of any movement; the women who in those first centuries of mediævalism thought on independent lines and resented the humiliations and restrictions imposed on their sex, had this additional obstacle to face before they succeeded in fighting themselves free, to a certain extent, from the shackles that bound them, and made themselves heard in spite of all opposition. And it must be admitted that, once their sense of justice was roused, their eyes opened to the fact that the reign of might was expiring with the barbarism to which it belonged

—just as Aristotle and Plato and other great philosophers of preceding generations had pleaded equality for women—there were thinking men of the new civilization who expressed themselves on this side, in defiance of conventional opinion, but who were in too small a minority to carry any weight. Erasmus, called the intellectual dictator of his age, went so far as to express surprise that women should still be found willing to face the burdens of maternity¹—an expression of sympathy that must have been a certain amelioration in the trial that, as most women have to face it, is generally taken as a matter of course.

Isolated opinion had, however, no effect on the laws. In France and Italy, no less than England, in the first dawn of the Renaissance and a reviving interest in art and literature, women appear to have been strictly excluded from all active participation in these fields; although extolled in extravagant language by men of the day as the source of all inspiration and achievement, when it came to any practical acknowledgment of their debt in these respects, the question of sex proved an insurmountable impediment. In other lines, the women of our own country had a slight advantage, as Englishmen, apparently not so apprehensive as to the stability of their own position, have never imposed the Salic law.

It may have been a slight irritation at the institution of monogamy that inspired man at

¹ *The Women of the Renaissance.* R. de Maulde la Clavière.

this time with a purely material view of the marriage state ; certainly in France, the centre of the dawning of the new civilization, love was deliberately excluded from any part in the proceedings. Although ostensibly raised from the level of a mercenary transaction, in practice it remained so, and was regarded from its utilitarian aspects only. The prospective wife was the last person to have any say at all in the matter.

The Women of the Renaissance, by de Maulde la Clavière, written in 1900, and translated by G. H. Ely, opens its first chapter with these words :

“There are two ways of dealing with the heart of a woman. You may have confidence in it, believe in it, regard it as a real element of strength and happiness, uplift and develop it, touching it then to fine issues in love, religion, philosophy. These are the lines on which the modern world proceeds. Or you may treat it as a frail organ of the body, unruly, incapable of good ; you may bind it down, early and with due care, with all sorts of reasonable chains, the chief of which, marriage, will keep it fast prisoned, and reduce it to nothingness and oblivion. This, of course, was the system of former days.”

And this, frankly described, was the environment in which woman was expected to pursue successfully the course of her evolution ! Not only had she to fight and vanquish foes to spiritual advance common to both sexes, but additional obstacles were placed in her path at every turn ;

she was afforded no opportunities towards self-expression, man being too concerned with the claims of his own evolution at this stage to recognize the higher call of altruism.

The woman's duty towards the husband in whose selection she had had no voice, was as it had been in Rome, to regulate his household, bear him children, nurse him when sick, and ask no questions as to how he spent his time when absent. Love in its higher form was ruled out of the situation¹; so even the palliative factor of devotion was absent, and the wife's conduct based entirely on her sense of duty and power of self-sacrifice, and the mother-love which came into play did she have children. As we may conclude that there were more so-called successful marriages than not—in fact, we are specifically told so—we may suppose a majority of women developing, through the self-control the situation demanded, qualities which in the responsibilities of government should prove inestimable.

Solomon's standard of wifely perfections must be accepted as the opinion of a man of much—although not unbiased—experience.

The perfect wife "seeketh wool and flax and worketh willingly with her hands. . . . She riseth also while it is yet night and giveth meat to her household and a portion to her maidens. . . . She girdeth her loins with strength."

Up to this ideal the women of the early Renais-

¹ *The Women of the Renaissance.* De Maulde la Clavière.

sance period were expected to live ; while they stayed at home, looked after the estate, kept the accounts, and found other equally stirring sources of interest, the husband spent life as it pleased him best, shut away from the fret of outer life with his books, did his tastes lean towards learning ; travelling over Europe if he was of restless disposition ; making himself agreeable to fair ladies, or cutting a gay figure at court, and preserving a silence on his return, that may have been of natural taciturnity or, more probably, of discretion, but in either case sufficiently exasperating to the partner who had been managing affairs for him during his absence !

It is necessary in treating the subject under discussion—the evolution of the mind of woman—to insist upon this picture of the disabilities and limitations by which she has been handicapped throughout her career. Only in this manner can we estimate at a true value the nature of the effort, the force of the dynamic energy within that in face of so much opposition was able to bring her potentialities of brain and will into evidence. What irresistible powers must have been at work in the comparatively few individual instances when woman, in spite of these circumstances, succeeded in making a mark for intellectuality or statesmanship on her generation !

As far back as the sixth century A.D. we find Clothilde, daughter of Chilperic, King of the Burgundians, distinguishing herself for mental develop-

ment by converting her husband Clovis, King of the Franks, to Christianity. Doubtless this was partly accomplished through the influence of her own virtuous life, the force of example—but virtue without mentality is apt to run to seed, and we must conclude that Clothilde in turning her husband to her own form of faith used sound theological argument in addition to the persuasions of example ; although precept without example is less convincing than example without precept, the latter is certainly less irritating !

In her position as Queen, Clothilde had her opportunity. Queens have always been able to command a hearing, in spite of the disadvantage of sex ; partly, perhaps, owing to the glamour that is royalty's heritage ; partly, in order to placate the King's majesty. She had leisure and some freedom of action, and to have converted a man from the barbarous paganism of those days is an achievement of which anyone might be proud. She, at all events, left the world a little better than she found it.

During the Dark Ages the names of notable women are few and far between. It is difficult to imagine Queen Boadicea and her daughters content with the opportunities afforded by the ordinary domestic routine. It is not only in man's breast that the passion for action and experience is implanted, and there would probably have been days when Queen Boadicea's handmaidens would have gone about muttering there was no

pleasing her ! But all history so remote is shrouded in the intervening centuries, and women no less than men may have lived and died unsung, who in a different age would have been handed down as notable characters. Might again reigned as right, and there was justification with that standard for the assumption of woman's inferiority.

It was not until the dawn of the fourteenth century that she made once more a definite step forward on her toilsome journey. Mothers began to have a word in the education of their sons ; girls were permitted instruction in languages, literature, and some of the sciences, although, as it was deemed fitting the office of teaching should be confined to the " superior " sex, they were taught by carefully-selected tutors, not governesses.

" All instruction for women should be looked at askance," was still an aphorism in the mouths of the male sex, and as it has always been admitted that knowledge is power, from their own point of view perhaps they were right.

Anne of France and Louise of Savoy appear as pioneers in their day. The former realized that what was wanting in woman was power of initiative, independence of thought, and the will to achieve in spite of the disadvantages of her position. In the circumstances of her past, how had it been possible for woman to develop any power of initiative, while in her state of subjection to another she had for the most part drifted along channels already cut out for her ? She might

guide, influence, scheme to accomplish ends, but with no power to carry out, there was not much encouragement for initiative. But in the matter of will, although in the ordinary acceptation of the word it might not have been worth reckoning with, she had developed a power of self-control, that we are told in the Scriptures makes of man a more formidable force than the taking of cities. It is not, however, so spectacular in its manifestations, and no doubt Anne of France was deploring a want of power to make up their minds and stick to it. She was quite aware of the galling limitations that had deflected the course of woman's will from its legitimate path into the tortuous windings of cunning, dissimulation, and that most subtle weapon of all, flattery, as a means of attaining ends.

Anne of France loved the truth; the byways of deceit and cajolery were abhorrent to her, as they are to all true women. She saw around her, her own sex hedged in on all sides, fluttering helplessly against bars specially devised to hinder their flight into the freedom of thought and action that would widen their consciousness, and open the door to the broad spaces of which art and philosophy held the key. She knew, as other women through all time have known, of minds capable of great things condemned to little things, chafing, unknown possibly to themselves, at the enveloping cloud of their own ignorance, shut out from the glowing light of knowledge which is

surely the right of all humanity. She deplored the methods by which a woman, upright and fearless perhaps by nature, might be coerced into those devious paths through force of circumstance with an unreasonable, possibly selfish husband who in pursuit of his own desires disregarded the welfare of either children or household. The wife with no status of her own, no independent property, in the interests of those in her care might be forced to flatter, placate, and at the supreme stimulus of mother-love even to lie, to attain ends in themselves not only legitimate, but desirable. The methods adopted in even these enlightened days, as betrayed by a woman's remark overheard in an omnibus—"I'll give him a kipper to 'is tea, and he won't say no to nothin' after that," would have been utterly distasteful to Anne of France, and are demoralizing in any generation.

She laboured to free her sisters from an inheritance of such courses, to develop in them power of will and stability of character that will exercise its coercive influence regardless of physical strength or muscle. She wished to see women straight, fearless, no longer allowing themselves to be driven into underhand, indirect subterfuge in the "management" of husbands; and to develop real will-power, both intellect and individuality are necessary.

Vivès, tutor to the four daughters of Queen Isabella of Spain, was one of the best friends woman ever had in her efforts towards self-expression. With the same views as Anne of France

with regard to the sex, he held that a liberal education in science, the arts, and classics, without neglecting the more practical crafts, such as cooking, was the foe of vanity, evil-speaking, inquisitiveness, caprice, all the vices, in fact, to which women are supposed to be more prone. His scheme of education with regard to the royal daughters of Spain proved so successful that other nations followed suit. Higher education for girls came into vogue, and men began to find admirable in woman other virtues besides those connected with the relations of the sexes. Vivès should have a special shrine in the soul of every woman who has the evolution of her sex at heart!

And with woman developing intellect and will-power all over the civilized world—except apparently in Venice, where old customs clung with tenacious vitality—an echo from the past comes wafting across the centuries—a whisper of agitated protest from panic-stricken Persian princes.

For women, La Clavière tells us, under the influence of education, were no longer hypnotized by a frown from their lords and masters. With logic and learning to back them, they could no longer be crushed by arguments they once did not know how to rebut. They were growing wings, and learning how to fly.

The first line of activity adopted by woman as the result of education was prompted—as it is to be sincerely hoped it always will be—by her love and care for her fellow-creatures, and by the

knowledge of how important and delicate is the modesty which is a girl's best defence. The idea grew that women should be attended by doctors of their own sex. The study of medicine seemed to come naturally to them.

The physicians were at once up in arms. Women might play at this, that, and the other, imagine they had minds if it pleased them, but they were to let medicine alone ! "The woman who meddles with our trade is a silly creature !" they declared, and no doubt the followers of other callings would have echoed the cry.

For the moment the women won the day. La Clavière hints at an undercurrent of resentment against physicians in general at the time ;¹ fees were extorted but results microscopic, and for the moment the profession seems to have been kept too busy fighting its own battles to court further complications. Women-doctors were tolerated ; no diplomas were necessary, or no doubt they would have been refused ; anyone with the necessary knowledge could set up as a physician and practise if patients were forthcoming, and women, many of them, seemed to prefer the ministrations of their own sex. The woman-doctor's ambitions were modest, her aim being the welfare of her fellow-creatures rather than her own advancement, and she appears to have started well on her new bid for freedom. But the men were nervous, curiously afraid of a rival they professed to despise,

¹ *The Women of the Renaissance.* De Maulde la Clavière.

jealous perhaps that woman's energies should be expended otherwise than in household matters. A few were, no doubt, honestly inspired by the chivalry that would shield her from the buffets and disillusionings of real life. No further facilities were accorded her by law in the way of civic privilege or status, and the profession refused to regard her otherwise than as an interloper.

During the sixteenth century, as the result of educational advantages, women began to take a more prominent part in literature and science. They formed literary societies, as they had formerly in the days of Aspasia. This impulse, showing itself whenever opportunity offered, is sufficient testimony to the yearning towards a wider experience than mere household drudgery affords. It is less interesting to order dinner and count the washing than to order campaigns—as Zenobia did—and count the stars, but there is no reason why an interest in the latter should result in the neglect of the former. Except in the pages of *Punch*, and the sarcasms of Molière, the house of a clever woman is better run than that of a fool; although, as Madame de Rambouillet was a solitary case in history of the contrary, Molière, her contemporary, may be excused for his pleasantries.

During the sixteenth century two very different types of women were making their influence widely felt: Margaret of Navarre, and, in our own country, Queen Elizabeth.

The evolution of woman's mind was at that

time so definitely advancing that the impetus given to it by such notable women as Margaret of France and Elizabeth was of noticeable importance. The sister of Francis I had been an influential figure as the leader of the more advanced school of thought in face of a conservative opposition who, in permitting a higher standard in the matter of education, considered they had conceded to women as much as they had any right to expect. Margaret had proved herself the soul of the intellectual movement in France, a leader of men as well as of women. Never have nobler ideals¹ been given to the world, ideals of duty, of love, of chivalry; ideals that lived and that sprang from a sex hitherto supposed to have inferior powers of mentality, little sense of honour, and were unfit to be entrusted with property in any form! With it all she was woman to her finger-tips, neglecting no household duties, accounting real love the finest-tempered weapon in woman's armoury. As Margaret of France, occupying a position of independence that placed her above the need for hypocrisy or any unworthy means of attaining her ends, she is a fine example of the heights to which her sex can rise when freed by circumstances from the more galling of the fetters binding them. France was the better, morally and intellectually, for her freedom of thought, and the courage with which she gave it expression, and for the strong individuality which that freedom produced. For

¹ *The Women of the Renaissance.* De Maulde la Clavière.

the persistence of the feminine movement in France she was admittedly largely responsible.

It is a curious irony that the flower of feminine progress should have first blossomed in a country where the Salic law laid its authoritative seal on woman's inferiority ; but, in spite of private opposition, and even of official fulmination, there are certain dynamic forces which are bound to find an outlet sooner or later.

CHAPTER VII

RISE OF THE FRENCH SALON

The power of suggestion through reiteration of conventional prejudice is a very potent influence and must not be underestimated when the evolution of woman's mind and her struggles towards emancipation are in view. Then, this power exercised by the general feeling and opinion of a wide public was not appreciated; now, we know it to be a factor to be reckoned with. Official pronouncements created an "atmosphere," and when woman was told she was not fit to occupy the throne, to hold property in her own right, to have opinions of her own, much less to act upon them, a bogey was gradually created that must have stood menacingly in the path of such pioneers as Margaret of France. There is nothing more paralyzing to the mind of either man or woman than to be continually told that all its efforts will be useless, that it has no power of initiative and is only fit to follow humbly in the footsteps of others.

"As a man thinketh, so is he," says the Eastern sage, and it is equally true of woman.

It was from this mire of suggestion as well as

of active opposition that Margaret's great soul rose and shed its influence over her generation, driven by the irresistible force within her. She was intellectual, as we know by her writings, *The Heptameron* among others, besides exemplifying moral qualities of a high order. But even her notable achievements gained no recognition for her sex as citizens; men, although giving freely the admiration and respect her fine characteristics demanded, continued the old parrot cry of woman's incapacity, the laws relating to her did not budge an inch, and her position with regard to civic privilege showed no improvement.

To cross to our own country for the moment, we find Elizabeth a few years later displaying qualities of a different calibre, but we have a tacit acknowledgment of her admiration for Margaret of France, in the fact that at the age of fourteen she translated one of her works, *The Mirror of a Simple Soul*, into her own language.

The character and general history of our greatest Queen is so well known to English readers that to go into her life in detail would be to go over well-worn ground; but in a review of notable women of the past her name cannot well be entirely ignored.

In her we certainly have an instance of a mentality and energy that would have refused to be suppressed in a position far less favourable to outward expression than that of Queen of England. So much can be gathered by her early life, spent partly in imprisonment, and always in the shadow

of a royal half-sister whose fear and jealousy prompted any form of persecution and underhand safeguards for what she considered her own preservation.

But so unhealthy an environment during girlhood failed to kill the fine qualities which she undoubtedly possessed. Her ideals were rather those of statesmanship and patriotism than the more subtle qualities of the soul. She was a leader of men, and succeeded in drawing into her immediate surroundings, not only the finest intellects and the greatest characters of her time, but those of any other time; a result that may legitimately be in part attributed to her own powers of discrimination and to the encouraging atmosphere of a court where men of high acquirements found a due appreciation. The sufferings and restrictions of her youth, which to so high-spirited a temperament must have proved peculiarly galling, left no sear of bitterness or petty revengefulness on a soul great enough to rise above them, and the emphasis laid by her biographers on the big mistake of her life in the execution of Mary of Scotland, proves it to have loomed colossally in a record free from the lesser ignoblenesses which would have detracted from its prominence.

And with it all, she too was a woman, with feminine vanity, and feminine whole-heartedness where she loved. He must have been either a very splendid representative of manhood, or a blind egotist, who could have honestly considered

Elizabeth his inferior, and her rule was no mere empty name, bestowed by courtesy on the head of the State. She ruled by the strength of her own will, and a power of statesmanship that commanded respect, and it can never be said that under the influence—even dominance—of a woman a nation is bound to deteriorate in either position or morals. Fortunately for the domestic peace of the world we may consider such women as Elizabeth to have been rare, for to live in close proximity to such potentialities kept in a state of repression, as they would have been in any private family in the sixteenth century, would have created too volcanic an atmosphere for daily use !

At the beginning of the seventeenth century Mme de Rambouillet inaugurated the society of the "Bas bleus." Indulgent amusement was still the attitude adopted by the majority of the opposite sex where feminine effort towards intellectuality was displayed ; but the society of Blue Stockings made its mark on the history of its time, earning immortality through its own merits in spite of Molière's witticisms in *Les Précieuses*.

Catharine, Marquise de Rambouillet, found in life at the Court of France, with its artificiality, conventions, flatterers, and frivolities, no scope for the genius which undoubtedly was hers. She was of Italian parentage, and had received an excellent education, including several languages and many of the higher branches of study, from

her mother. As it had been in the days of Ancient Greece and again in Rome, so it proved in the new civilization that had arisen from the ashes of the old—scope for talent, for influence in matters of state, and any opportunity for self-development, appeared to be in the majority of cases the perquisite of the courtesan.

But Mme de Rambouillet was not dismayed ; she determined to carve out her own destiny and yet remain respectable. She formed an illustrious circle—women of the higher education, who had studied the classics, formed opinions of their own, and had original ideas. Her taste in decoration was so approved that her word in such matters became the final appeal ; even Marie de Medici followed her advice, and spread the fame of her artistic perception. A chief attraction at the Hôtel Rambouillet was Mlle de Scudéry. She earned for herself the nickname of the Tenth Muse, and her most celebrated work was the romance of Artamène, in ten volumes, often referred to even in the present day for sketches of contemporaneous society. To write ten volumes of anything, good or indifferent, at all events proves female characteristics that include powers of concentration and perseverance ! The “ Bas bleus ” attracted all that was highest and best in the art and literature of the day, and among the names of its visitors we find Richelieu, Scarron, Corneille, La Rochefoucauld, Malherbe, and many more.

This venture in literary societies was followed by others ; Mlle de Scudéry was herself the leader of one, followed by Mme de Sevigné, the Marquise de Sablé, the Duchesse de Longueville and others, showing how ready women were to take advantage of their advance towards emancipation, to enlarge the sphere of their interests, and break loose from the old limitations imposed upon them. Mme de Sevigné's accomplishments have a world-wide reputation, that nothing said now can add to ; her letters to her daughter are models of style, her language picturesque and flowing. She was left a widow early in life, rich, with one son and one daughter, and had every opportunity of building, upon the foundation of an excellent education, the character for learning and independence of thought which will for ever survive her.

Of course these outstanding examples of the capabilities of womanhood had their imitators,—drawn from the populous level of average minds ; women who tried to push themselves forward through love of notoriety, eager for the limelight, or the search for excitement rather than desire for knowledge and the chafe of suppressed energies. There will always be such ignoble souls, but it would be manifestly unfair to condemn the admittedly great for the sins of the lesser. It was the later imitators of the “*Bas bleus*” whom Molière pilloried in his comedy, and possibly he was justified ; no doubt also many men of the day, rebellious

at what they considered an incursion into their rightful preserves, were only too pleased to find a peg upon which to hang the banner of their protest.

The *salons* of the next two centuries are in themselves sufficient evidence of the capacity of women, given opportunity, to make a notable mark in the fields of literature and politics; the struggle was still being waged in spite of the disadvantages of unequal legislation. Men might admit the powers of mentality, the forceful influence, the intuitive perceptions of the sex, but they were far from admitting female equality, or right to equality of legislation in any respect that was likely to affect themselves. Infidelity to the marriage bond was still condoned in the one sex and condemned in the other. Inconstancy in man was accounted a venial fault, the natural and more or less excusable result of a desire for change; in woman it has always been condemned as caprice, heartlessness, and evidence of a shallow soul. Men threw aside their mistresses as they did their gloves, and the convents harboured many a breaking heart—not only from among the La Vallières of the community—while the equally guilty went scot-free among his fellow-men.

Did woman acquiesce?—did she ever acquiesce, because she did not care?—and if she cared, is it not certain that the suffering that must necessarily have been hers, borne with a splendid fortitude, must eventually have its reaction?

Among other foes in the struggle for freedom, woman has had to face the most subtly undermining influence in the world—ridicule. From all time till the end of the last century any feminine protest at prevailing conditions, any claim for “rights” in any form, seems to have excited in the opposite sex an exquisite amusement. While the intellectual *salons*, inaugurated by Mme de Rambouillet, originating in the Blue Stockings—a title self-evident in its origin—were being parodied by Molière, and the members of them ironically called “les Précieuses,” their effects were admitted on all sides to be an elevating influence on contemporaneous society. One record, after dilating on the results of these coteries of the intellectual women of the seventeenth century—the suppression of coarseness and the raising of standards—finishes by pointing out that these literary *salons* were by no means unmixed evils—praise that can hardly be called extravagant.¹

There has been nothing to show that in the processes of self-development and extension of limitation women have become unsexed. Even in instances of martial achievement, such as Judith, Zenobia, Boadicea, Joan of Arc—of whom no special mention has been made as it might be objected she was not normal—or the Maid of Saragossa, the evidence is all the other way. Such attributes do not appear to interfere with the gentler qualities of woman’s nature. Moreover,

¹ Harmsworth’s *Encyclopædia*.

these instances are not quoted as examples to follow—unless circumstances should point that way—but as evidence of what the sex is capable of; of dynamic energies which must in many cases have been suppressed through want of outlet. Woman's place is not and cannot ever be in the camp, not by reason of inferiority, but of unsuitability. There has been quite enough fighting in the world by man, without woman adding to the general carnage by entering the field also. Her place will always be to bind up wounds, not to inflict them. Nor is the mass of them ever likely to do so. With her quicker intuitions, imagination, and the power of putting herself in another's place born of many generations of training, reluctance to inflict pain will always be one of her most lively instincts.

At the same time, I doubt whether women's influence, had they been allowed to exert it in matters of state, would have tended as many men have thought, to a general peace that would have been both ignoble and enervating. War has its uses, and women have been well aware that war alone brings out in man the qualities they most admire. Women have a fine sense of honour—in spite of all the opposite sex may say!—and when it is a question of war for a noble cause, for the honour of her country, for the defence of those near and dear to her, woman has never been found backward in advocating it. There is even a vein of romance in every true woman that would

nerve her arm to raise standards in a just cause, for she has always been ready to range herself on the side of the weak and helpless.

But she detests war for its own sake, for the sake of ambition, greed, or vindictiveness in the individual. She resents the possibility of an entire country being devastated and bereaved for the sake of a personal grievance or private passions. Men in the earlier stages of their march towards individualization have revelled in fighting for fighting's sake, loved to meet and vanquish their fellows, and hand tales of their prowess down to their posterity. Had women been likewise animated by lust of battle there would have been no drag, no counterbalancing influence, and surely the race would have exterminated itself in universal carnage—the world a vast arena.

It is woman's horror of war in the main that has kept the balance even, but when right was on her side she has been willing enough to do her part, although her instincts may have been to keep her country from its horror so long as honour permits. Beatrice d'Este was not the only woman who has spurred men on to fight, and the profound contempt she has for the male who fails to take his proper place in the defence of his country shows her sympathy with legitimate war when honour demands it.

The influence of woman in France, politically and intellectually, reached great heights during the eighteenth century, although legally and theo-

retically she was still in complete subjection to the other sex. She could claim nothing by right. Woman's evolution in England was progressing within much the same limitations, but during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries France was undoubtedly in the forefront of feminine progress.

The century resounds with notable names. There were many women who proved that in spite of the slough of ignorance to which man's domination had for so long condemned them, they were not necessarily the stupid, illogical, unintellectual creatures he supposed; as higher education became the fashion the numbers of women distinguishing themselves in literature and different lines of mentality rapidly increased, and the qualities hitherto manifesting themselves in the few owing to the fortunate chance of opportunity for expression, may presumably have been latent in the many where such opportunity lacked. Once prove such qualities to be inherent in individual instances, it is no longer logical to deny the potentiality for them to the sex as a whole.

Among these examples Mme de Deffand takes a foremost place in the eighteenth century. She was associated with Mlle de l'Espinasse, and corresponded with Horace Walpole, Montesquieu, Voltaire, and other leading men of the time. For over twenty years of her life she was blind, and although apparently this circumstance by no means dulled her wit it must certainly have limited her activities in literature.

The Comtesse du Barri, the favourite of Louis XV, is an instructive example of the result of environment on the early life of a woman who from an atmosphere of vice and immorality rose to great heights of self-sacrifice, finally expiating her early sins by death on the scaffold. Although she was of the people, uneducated, a milliner's assistant, her biography deserves a place among those of notable women; it is well known that she succeeded in her deliberate intention of attracting the King's notice through the introduction of his valet, and of becoming his mistress. Her influence over her royal lover became almost unlimited, and at his death she was considered capable of playing so important a part in current affairs of state as to warrant her forcible seclusion within the walls of a convent. Louis XVI released her after she had passed what we may conclude to have been some salutarily chastening years in the purifying atmosphere of convent walls, for she spent the remainder of her life gratefully and devotedly in his service.

Eventually, with great courage, she visited England for the express purpose of selling her jewellery, to give the proceeds to the King's service; on her return to France she was arrested for being in sympathy with a so-called tyrant, and was finally executed in 1793.

In the Comtesse du Barri we have an interesting psychological study. In her person she exemplified the extremes of vice and virtue, not, as is

often the case, simultaneously according as impulse moved her, but in, if one may say so, watertight compartments, due, it may be presumed, to a difference in environment. She was uneducated, of the working class, uncontrolled, conscious of inner fires of energy longing for expression; ambitious, intelligent, and as her after-life betrays, with capacities for greater things than trimming hats. There is no reason to suppose her intrigue with regard to Louis XV was prompted by vicious instincts, but that in it she found her only opportunity, as other courtesans had found before, and, chafing at the petty restrictions and uninteresting routine of a working woman's daily life, she jumped at a possible outlet. It is impossible to contemplate such a personality making a success of life as the submissive wife of some worthy bourgeois regarding all her gifts and good qualities as a special creation for his benefit, cooking his dinner, saving his money, darning his stockings, echoing his opinions, living meekly, and giving as little trouble as possible over her death!

The capacities of such a brain with the dynamic force behind it were bound to find egress in some form, and had Mme du Barri started life's journey in the environment of her later years, instead of the restricted conditions—and possibly lax principles—of a small milliner's shop, she might have found other directions for the feverish energies consuming her than a life of vice at the Court of France, and lived—as she died—a pattern of all the virtues.

But always, it must be remembered, beneath the apparent advance in public opinion and increase in the outward profession of respect, women must still have been subject to the hidden chafe of a sense of injustice at the still unequal legislation, the gnaw of perfectly justifiable jealousies, and the brave defence of wounded pride that would ignore before the world the humiliations consequent on the general leniency towards man's infidelity. Woman might prove herself worthy of responsible positions, to be on an intellectual level with the philosophers and statesmen of her age, to have courage, endurance, judgment, and above all, self-control; but she was still in the eyes of the law, and therefore presumably in those of masculine opinion, unfit to hold property except at the will of husband or father, to have a voice in the government not only of her country, but of her own sex, or to be the natural guardian of her children; while the most ignorant, gross-minded, unintelligent labourer on her husband's estate, was taught to look upon her as his inferior—and believed her to be so.

Up the steep incline of the centuries that lay between her and barbarism, woman had fought her way step by step, her whole demeanour and dogged endeavour a flat contradiction to the contented acquiescence in subjection to man which tradition ascribed to her. She was required to face practical disadvantages, limitation of opportunity, inequality of legal status, a fog of prejudice

and an atmosphere of suggestion that might well have stifled all effort and initiative at its inception. She had revealed a fund of qualities that, given an environment of encouragement and stimulation, should prove as useful to the State as those of a purely masculine nature. She had shown herself capable of intelligent interest in philosophy and science and that her intuitions and imaginative prevision were invaluable in the exercise of government.

But in the eyes of the law she was a cipher still, except so far as she was safeguarded to a certain extent as wife and mother; to attain her ends the old methods only were open. Men, while criticizing her as petty, insincere, and not always straightforward, condemned her to these unworthy weapons in dealing with his moods and in the overcoming of unreasonable and often exasperating opposition.

Then, when at last she was beginning to make herself heard, to formulate protests against unjust legislation, and opening men's eyes to inherent qualifications hitherto unsuspected, the French Revolution put the extinguisher on her hopes, toppled her from the modest heights to which she had attained, and in the general upheaval, the instinct of the strong right arm reasserted itself and mob law wiped out the world over which she had held sway for two centuries.

But education had raised her from the slough of chaotic mentality that did not know what it

really wanted ; she knew now, had begun definitely to formulate aims, and was rapidly equipping herself to reach them. Public opinion had left its impress, and even a French Revolution could not entirely erase it. Civilization sets its seal on man much more lightly than on woman ; he is more ready to return to the primitive instincts of barbarism. Should circumstances, such as war, or any urgency for self-preservation, bring him again face to face with the fierce struggle for existence, for asserting his supremacy over other men, he returns very easily to brutality. The crude instincts of the hunter have never died in him ; the lust for battle, for taking what he wants and keeping it when he has it, are as strong in him to this day as they were in his primitive ancestors. Civilization means far more to woman ; the recognition of higher standards than those of mere muscular prowess is her salvation ; a return to barbarism has always boded ill for her, and man's treatment of her has been a criterion of the degree of his evolution. In Soviet Russia the degradation and debasement of womanhood was eloquent of the quality of its texture ; it reimposed a yoke that made of her little more than a beast of the field.

In the red glow of that last decade of the eighteenth century the glories of the French *salons* departed, leaving behind them a glamour and a perfume that will linger sensuously through ages of telephones, wireless messages, motor-omnibuses, and other so-called enemies of romance. Women

created them, and were the soul and the inspiration of them. During those two centuries of wider activities, they had risen, superior to environment ; their outlook before had been so circumscribed, their glimpses of the world through such small windows ; scraps and odds and ends of life had been all they had to build upon. In their greater freedom and opportunity for channels of self-expression, they were developing the powers of wise judgment, balanced opinion, and a sense of responsibility, all attributes impossible to acquire in the narrow restrictions of a rigid domesticity, and absence of education ; and above all they were gaining for the first time a quality that only contact with the outside world can give, a sense of proportion.

CHAPTER VIII

RESULTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

We must not turn the page on these pioneers of intellectual womanhood that had their centre in France without special reference to two of the most notable names among them—Mme. Récamier and Mme. de Staël.

At a time when France was plunged into temporary chaos, and old land-marks overthrown, these names form a link between two centuries that had proved of outstanding value to the evolution of woman's mind and individuality and the still more important period to come. During the disastrous years of the French Revolution, and the subsequent Napoleonic wars, there was a spirit abroad that could not have made for the advancement of purely intellectual or artistic thought in any line ; we have seen in our own day how war tends to upset values, and to raise its own standards for the time being, not to mention the wholesale sacrifice of potential genius. With its feet on the war-path, a nation will revert to a more or less barbarous condition. The arts and sciences belong to civilization ; war to barbarism, and nations fighting for life will thrust aside in the struggle for survival all issues not directly contributing to it.

That these two women should have managed to hold their own, with the world around them seething with emotions and instincts, unbridled and unashamed, that belong rightly to primitive man, is very remarkable and speaks highly not only for the influence of their wit and adaptability to difficult circumstances, but to the essential womanliness that has generally been the chief charm of great women. To ape man has been and always will be a fundamental mistake which no truly intuitive woman is likely to make.

Jeanne Récamier, undaunted by the maelström of which her nation was the centre, continued to make her *salon* the meeting-place of the great men of the day ; politicians, soldiers, philosophers were drawn into the congenial atmosphere of culture and brilliant conversation. She was the friend of Chateaubriand, and continued to hold sway over intellectual Paris until Napoleon banished her from that city. With Mme. de Staël she earned by her sharply-tempered wit and open criticism the active hostility of the First Consul, who suffered criticism gladly from no one—much less a woman!—and both offenders expiated through enforced exile their temerity in presuming that Napoleon Bonaparte could do wrong. His remark on issuing the edict that banished Mme. de Staël from Paris implies that the city was not big enough to hold them both, and proves at all events that he considered her an enemy worthy of his steel, which must pass for a compliment to a sex that was not supposed to count !

To have defied the conqueror of half Europe at the very zenith of his success displays a courage not only moral, but in days when careers were apt to terminate abruptly in the Bastille or on the guillotine, physical also in its nature.

Although avowedly in favour of the people at the commencement of the Revolution, Mme. de Staël's sense of justice and humanity was shocked by the enormities of a nation gone mad, and she wrote an eloquent defence of its Queen, Marie Antoinette ; it was this attitude, no less than the influence she exercised in political circles when her great powers of intuition and level judgment were fully appreciated, that earned for her the ill-will of the man of the moment, against whose policy of aggression and indifference to the rights of the weak she openly protested.

How is it possible that man can seriously consider such a mind so balanced, so indifferent to personal interests in proclaiming principles so obviously unwelcome at headquarters, unfit to have a say in the government of a nation, or more particularly of her own sex ?—and although from a purely social point of view public opinion had undergone changes, due to a general advance in the standards of education and the natural trend of civilization, women were able to prove their metal in some directions, from the civic and industrial standpoint they were in no better position than before ; sex disqualification meeting them at every turn, debarred them from legal status or any of the rewards of intellect or endeavour open to man.

With regard to the objects of this discussion however Mme. de Staël's treatise on suicide is perhaps the most important of her works. It demonstrates of what the sex, hitherto condemned as illogical and superficial, is capable when released from the rigid restrictions of a traditional environment.

Her analysis of the ethics of suicide is influenced neither by ecclesiastical dogma nor fulminations, nor by the casuistry that would reserve to humanity the right to do as they choose with their own lives. She weighs its ethical aspects by the noblest standards, indicating the subtle point at which unjustifiable destruction of life ends, and self-sacrifice begins; insisting on the point that deliberate immolation even of life itself for the welfare of others is not to be placed on the same level as the act of a man who takes suicide as a means of escape from the inevitable penalties of unworthy living; that a whole world of difference lies between the act of a Quintius Curtius and of a Cleopatra.

Her sketch of the ideal in man, showing how the possession of certain qualities would inevitably guard him from the temptation to bring his life to an ignoble end, is a beautiful portrayal of the true altruism which is the goal of any civilization going deeper than a mere veneer of outward convention.

This treatise was read, discussed and criticized by the leading men of the day as a masterpiece of logic, style and purity of sentiment; that it owed its authorship to a woman is eloquent of the changes a widening of environment may effect. Under the

old rigid restrictions of a woman's daily life, that had been re-enforced after the downfall of Roman supremacy, or the limitations of primitive or early civilization, how would it have been possible for her to attain the knowledge necessary to deal with such a subject—a knowledge that could only come from experience and free contact with other minds? There is no such whetstone for the sharpening of wits as the challenge of other wits, and power of balanced judgment must be acquired in the broader fields of life through the development of a sense of proportion. A clash of wits on the domestic hearth may possibly be stimulating in its way, but is apt to finish in the Divorce Court without achieving any valuable end in itself!

The subtle power of analysis evinced in Mme. de Staël's treatise on suicide shows the blossoming of a power of discrimination that, but for opportunity, might have lain latent, and finally died without ever coming to the surface. Her arguments show more thought and more power to convince than any theological reasoning, or threats of penalties hereafter. Hers has been called the illogical sex, but woman has always possessed a nicer perception of the difference between logic and casuistry than man may have suspected—in the first place because want of education left her inarticulate; and later, man having assumed the right to lay down the law, to question the soundness of his argument led to disturbances of the peace, without achieving any definite results! "Woman convinced against her

will " was the man's point of view ; that she might remain of the same opinion still—her own.

An interesting psychological question is raised at this stage in the evolution of woman's mind resolving itself, not only into a matter of sex-disability, but dealing incidentally with the sources of inspiration.

Inspiration is a loosely applied term for all stimuli towards the manifestation of genius. As man's brain is merely the mechanism through which the mind works, we must probe further for the source of the initiative and desire for expression of which the results are evident in the works of great masters. We call the source of those results inspiration.

Certain lines of Eastern philosophy hold that the stimulus for all purely intellectual effort owes its origin to a lower inspirational level than either music or painting, the latter being next in order of sublimity, and music the highest of all. This suggestion is founded on the comparative methods of expression and attendant difficulties. In all forms of writing, or oratory, language, with its peculiar facilities for the transmission of ideas from one brain to another, is at our command ; the technicalities of writing are comparatively easy to attain ; we can elaborate, enlarge upon and, through the use of words, convey, the ideas received through inspiration to other brains sufficiently sympathetic to receive them.

In painting the methods are different. The

message has to be given without recourse to language ; must flash directly from brain to brain, no clumsily elaborate exposition used in the transmission. The picture must be complete in itself, conveying the artist's idea not so much through the intellect as through the emotions. Art that fails to touch the soul fails in its message ; it should be a link between spirit and matter. The technique is difficult, and can only be achieved through years of study—is sometimes never achieved at all ; inspiration may be waiting, urging, but may remain unrecognized for want of the power to express. An ordinary education—granted a gift behind it—will enable a writer to take up his pen and write ; it will not enable him to take up a brush and paint.

All that applies to painting applies equally to the highest of all the arts—music.

Here, again, the channels to free expression in its highest form are blocked by the difficulties of technique. The message is dependent upon a sequence, or combination of vibrations, the subtle laws of which must be mastered, the art in transmitting them calling for equal subtlety. The appeal must be made to the best and highest in man's soul ; to speak even of " the music of the spheres " is to arouse, through the imagination, unformulated longings for something beyond our reach, outside our conception. The inspiration that finds expression in these conditions of dense matter must be attributed to very exalted inspirational levels.

Woman has been, admittedly, the channel throughout all ages whence man has drawn some of his finest inspirations; in the majority of cases of prominent men there has been an Egeria in the background. Prometheus was punished by Jupiter for giving more of the heavenly fire to woman than to his own sex.

Why then do we find—through all the civilizations that have waxed and waned, raising the level of feminine intelligence and her success in the fields of literature to the very highest levels, culminating in the genius of to-day—no mention of any outstanding representative of her sex during those two brilliant centuries of her victory over environment in the fields of either music or painting?

That it is so has often been thrown in her face by the detractors of her sex, and the concrete facts of history justify the accusation.

Does the answer lie in the assumption that the development of intellect and mentality is the first step on the ladder of man's progress, and that woman has been expected to run before she can walk? In fighting for self-expression she has transcended environment so far as to place her foot upon this first step of the arduous ascent to freedom, but that to win through to the full expression of the higher forms of inspiration, involving years of earnest labour in the acquirement of necessary technique, with no facilities or encouragement, a further grinding of the mills of God was necessary.

To look round at passing events, and note the

rapid increase in the ranks not only of literature, but of painting and music, of women who are steadily raising the level of feminine proficiency in these directions, it is surely not unreasonable to predict that, given time to throw off the effects of the limitations that have crippled their energies through long centuries, their achievements will eventually equal, or even surpass man's in sublimity of conception and accomplishment, although retaining certain characteristics in the manner of expression, due to inherent differences in man's and woman's interpretation of life.

Whatever the explanation, the fact remains that at the end of the epoch that raised woman from a slough of ignorance and subjection into an intellectual power, the only name that can be brought forward as having earned really prominent distinction in the arts is that of Angelica Kauffmann.

She was of Swiss origin, the daughter of an artist, who imbued her with his tastes and aspirations and taught her as far as was possible the rudiments of the art he himself practised. She is to be admired for having persevered in spite of all the difficulties besetting any woman of that day who attempted to strike out a line for herself, not to mention the absence of facilities for study and instruction; nothing of the sort was available. She settled eventually in England, and it is surprising evidence of the strides made in public opinion with regard to female activities, that when the Royal Academy of Arts was founded in London by Sir Joshua

Reynolds and others Angelica Kauffmann was invited to be an original member. Mary Moser, whose name is perhaps less well known to posterity, also received that honour.

Viewing her work with the impartial judgment of a succeeding generation I fancy it is generally admitted that it does not reach the standard of contemporary artists; one can only imagine she was elected to membership by a body of men out of pure astonishment that a woman could paint at all!—They must in this case be exonerated from the suspicion that the subsequent banishment of female painters was due to the fear inspired by a formidable rival!

Her drawing may have been faulty, but she made nevertheless a lasting name in the world of art; her decorative paintings will always be admired, and that a place should have been found for her in the National Gallery justifies a claim to be represented in the art of her time. Her success was the more remarkable in that it was not due to a comparison with mediocre standards. Never had art attained so high a level in England; an age that could produce a Reynolds, Romney, Kneller, Hogarth, and many others equally prominent was not lacking in standards for comparison. To have admitted work that was possibly not up to this level, by a woman, leads one to suspect a chivalry and generosity to be much admired but is not what women ask. In such matters they only ask for a fair field and no favour either way in the matter of sex. It is a pity that the failure of this pioneer of

her sex in painting, to reach the highest level, should have resulted in the exclusion of her successors without any allowances made for the centuries of ignorance and limitations which lay behind them. Women should have been given more time. In withholding the guerdons and encouragements open to men, the difficulties of self-expression were vastly enhanced, the road re-strewn with the old stumbling-blocks; but that the desire for that expression was as insistent in woman's breast as in man's is evident by the pertinacity with which she has stuck to her point, founding her own societies, raising with each generation the standard of her work, winning recognition on all sides until at the present moment the Royal Academy is the only body in the world of English Art that still refuses to admit women to its ranks.

Although she may not have realized masculine ideals, Angelica Kauffmann is a bright star in the history of the sex in giving definite proof of what that sex is capable. Men had never worked under such cruel disabilities as they had dealt out to women, who are equally capable of the creative fire, the burning fever to express what is in them—a fever that can never find appeasement in the restricted environment that barbarism decreed to be their birthright. To judge by the number of women in the arena of art to-day, there must have been countless souls in past ages born with the temperament, the craving, the latent power for expression in this direction, but doomed to repression and

eventual atrophy in an atmosphere calculated to bring to earth the loftiest flights of imaginative conception—flights that can turn a dun-coloured world into little less than Heaven.

Man, in reaching out for expression, knows well what it means to be faced with a sense of impotence, to find the stimulus within baffled by his own limitations ; to fall short of visionary ideals, and be confronted with apparently insuperable barriers between conception and fruition. In those moments when accomplishment falls far short of intention, when the intricacies of technique prove his master, and fulfilment as elusive as a will-o'-the-wisp, he becomes captious, unreasonable, soured ; can find no joy in a world seemingly turned to ashes. His whole mind becomes occupied with the reasons for his failure, his hopes of finding the remedy, his despair of ever reaching the goal towards which his feet are set. He also knows the lightness of heart that attends even a halting success. Minor worries sit lightly on his shoulders, the world becomes a song ; ambition raises its head again, Aladdin's lamp is still there for those who seek.

He has known what it was as a child, born with the artist's instincts within him, to watch a radiant sunset or a tumbling sea, with tears in his eyes because he could not paint it—to find in a beautiful landscape more pain than pleasure because the passion for creation pricked his senses into a longing for God knows what—the craving to be identified with the whole, that seems to some a justification for Pantheism.

Can he not therefore imagine what it has meant to woman through the years that time has eaten ?

To have that prick in her blood, her eyes lifting always to things not of earth, the pleasures of imagination knocking insistently at her heart, messages from inspirational planes crying out for transmission—and to be forced to turn a deaf ear ! To be stirred by restless longings, and obliged to repress them ; to inherit a temperament that can never find peace except through the channel of an outward expression denied to it. Has that taught woman nothing ? Has she not learnt to repress—and smile ?

Such women must always have been, and opportunity was more elusive to the artists than to writers, for whom the methods of expression were not so complicated. The manual part of painting, or sculpture, or music is not mastered easily ; granted something to express, years of study and failure must lie between it and the perfection of outward manifestation. The hand must be taught to obey the brain before the idea can find harmonious materialization. With the cream of her energies absorbed by the trivialities and daily surmounting of petty obstacles that fall to the lot of most women the technical requirements of any art have been difficult to attain.

This is no doubt the reason why women have been longer in finding their feet with regard to music, painting and sculpture, for in all those departments of life no factor plays a more important part than environment.

CHAPTER IX

SOME INHERENT QUALITIES

A dip into history has shown us that even in the matter of physical courage woman when called upon has not been found wanting.

With the sense of comparative weakness always with her, it is not surprising that purely physical courage should not be among her marked characteristics. Man, when assailed by his fellow-man, presumes the conditions of the struggle may be equal ; woman in the same circumstances knows from the start she has not a "dog's chance." A naturally unnerving situation. Put a revolver into her hand, or even a poker !—and it is surprising what a sudden access of confidence is the result—except perhaps with those, now comparatively rare, members of the sex who are afraid of the revolver !

When it comes to sleeping in rooms supposed to be "haunted" and man's defences are reduced to the same level as woman's, the courage that has stood him in good stead on battlefields is sometimes as conspicuously absent in the one sex as in the other ! That he may profess a disbelief in "ghosts" seems to be outside the question !

Some of the most courageous acts in history

have been performed by women—doubly courageous did men but understand it, because of that ever-present sense of their weakness behind it ; and in those awful years of bloodshed during the last decade of the eighteenth century in France there were many notable examples. After lying latent and for the most part unsuspected throughout years of frivolity in the exotic atmosphere of the French Court, it was brought to the surface by misfortune and tragedy.

God knows whence it sprang ! For with centuries of carefully sheltered life behind her, fed on the suggestion that all women were cowards and need not be ashamed of it, the stimulus at the back of man's courage—fear of his fellow-man's opinion—was wanting. Environment could not have been responsible ; it must have been inherent in those delicate women of France, who faced death calmly and justified the tradition of there being “ something in blood.” For centuries women had been actually encouraged in a display of cowardice they certainly did not always feel ; it was supposed to enhance a woman's charms in men's eyes by affording them an opportunity to display their own prowess ; it also made an appeal of a nobler sort to their protective instincts.

The pride of race that sustained those women of the Revolution must have been of fine quality in its essence, sufficiently strong to curb all show of emotion, and sustaining many of them up to the moment of death. Surely as high a test of courage—or even

higher—than any danger run in the heat and excitement of battle ?

The Queen herself, Marie Antoinette, set an example that will live until in ages of time to come the records of France become “prehistoric.” To face that raging mob with nothing between her and it but the council table pulled across the room, testified to a courage that defies any ordinary imagination. She received the sentence of death with calm dignity, and refuted all the charges against her ; the very advocates themselves who had been appointed to defend her were afraid to do so, and she had to speak for herself, keeping her wits about her, and controlling any show of emotion in the most trying moment of her life.

Then picture the sequel—brought out of prison, to be taken in a cart, seated back to the horses to the place of execution. Her hair was cut off, and a white cap placed on her head. She was driven through a vast mob of the people whom she regarded with indifference, talking to the priest who accompanied her without the least trace of suffering or fear, until she passed up the steps of the scaffold to the executioner awaiting her.

Compare this long-drawn-out agony with an execution of to-day, and the dispatch with which the final proceedings are conducted, and even in spite of it, the condition of helplessness to which the main actor is often reduced. The only sign of emotion shown by Marie Antoinette was when, on

the scaffold, she cast one quick glance towards the Tuileries.¹

Where all the women of the French Court were so brave it is almost superfluous to mention names. Madame Roland was condemned on a false charge of conspiracy. She was accomplished and beautiful, and her domestic virtues as pronounced as the more intellectual. She met her death without faltering, making the historic ejaculation as she passed the statue of Liberty on the way to execution, "O Liberty, how many crimes are committed in thy name!"

The Princesse de Lamballe was no less courageous. Shut up in La Force, her executioners demanded from her a repudiation of the King and Queen. If she would say she hated them she was promised her liberty. In the face of death—and a horrible death—she refused to do so, and they opened the door and threw her to a mob by whom she was torn to pieces.

But perhaps the palm for sheer deliberate courage without the sustaining addition of excitement or the pride of race that refuses to be abased, lies with Charlotte Corday. She was a quiet inconspicuous member of the Provincial Noblesse, who made up her mind in the little town of Caen that if Marat were dead her country might again find peace. Picture this young woman—who may never have had a previous occasion to prove what was in her

¹ *Contemporary History of the French Revolution.* F. B. Harrison.

in her life—going to a shop to buy a dagger, concealing it, and arranging to journey up to Paris alone, to stab a man on whom she had never set eyes. After several vain attempts she was admitted to the room in which the tyrant was having a slipper-bath, engaged him in conversation about the deputies at Caen, without betraying herself by a quiver of the eyelid, drew the knife concealed upon her, and plunged it into his heart.

She then went quietly out to—as she well knew—death by the guillotine, and was executed a few days later in the red garment of the assassin, showing the unwavering fortitude that had never failed her from the first inception of the plan. Although no attempt be made to justify her action, her courage was undeniable; a martyr for her country's sake if ever there was one!

These instances of true courage in face of physical dangers displayed by women are but a few among many. There have been notable cases in the history of every country, in the Indian Mutiny and throughout the civilizations of old. I have particularly referred to the French Revolution, as it furnished an illustration of what part can be played by environment in the suppression of some of the inherent qualities of women that but for that drama would have remained unsuspected.

These delicate, fastidious, sheltered members of the French Noblesse had no doubt posed and acted their parts at court in conformity with the traditions and conventional rules of conduct imposed upon

their sex. Probably they had, in accordance with what was expected of them, screamed at mice and fled incontinently from cows, invoking the aid and protection of the braver sex ! I do not for a moment wish to imply that the exhibition of such terrors was invariably a pose, but that if girls were taught to be ashamed of cowardice equally with boys there would be much less of such displays. Women not taught to exercise any control where physical cowardice is concerned deceived even themselves, and allowed cowardice to become a habit unrestrained. The last war has proved what female nerves can stand, and there are not many girls who are terrified so easily nowadays. There is no emotion more paralysing or demoralizing than fear in any form, and with the testimony of those women of France and others in history to a courage that must have been inherent in them and therefore possibly so in the majority of the sex, we may conclude that if woman's environment were to encourage the cultivation of physical bravery no less than moral, and tradition were to cease telling her she is a coward, she would throw off the habit of fear in any form, and gain in dignity and the qualities which go with the mastery of the self.

With the French Revolution a century neared its end that had brought into brilliant fruition the results of education and intellectual development among the women of France ; the culture and learning of the Paris *salons* passed out in the country's supreme convulsion, and the mantle of them

appears to have fallen more or less upon a bevy of English writers. While the women representing education and mentality were pouring their blood out under the knife of the guillotine, Jane Austen, buried in a country parish in England, was beginning the scribblings that were to blossom eventually into a flower of English literature. She was starting to make immortality for herself in the sheltered surroundings of an old-world country rectory, while Angelica Kauffmann was vindicating the potentialities of her sex in the great world of Art.

In Jane Austen we have one of the most surprising examples of woman's adaptability to, and triumph over, environment and the power of suggestion.

In a world still quivering from the horrors of a people gone mad, and distorted by conflict, she lived a life so retired and secluded that no impact from outside disturbances touched her. She had never been out of her native country, and had therefore received none of the stimulus that contact with other minds and other manners can bestow. She had no incentive to creative work in her immediate surroundings ; on the contrary, the narrow influence of clerical life and opinion was more likely to have checked than encouraged any attempt to write fiction. Her early efforts were carried out in secret, for in days when it was considered a breach of conventional habit for women even to read novels—and the prevailing novel of the day in England was certainly coarse and very broad in its suggestive-

ness—it must have seemed a positive outrage of all tradition that she should propose to write one! And having written it, the wonder is she should have succeeded in getting it published.

Owing to the paucity of fiction-writing at that time, compared with the present, she had little to guide her with regard to style and manner, which is perhaps the reason why her novels have been, and probably will be, unique of their kind. She ploughed her own furrows on what was then more or less virgin soil, proving woman's capacity for initiative and originality no less than Mrs. Radcliffe along totally different lines had done before her; there is admittedly a quality in her books, a directness and simplicity and a humour that with all its apparent gentleness has a caustic side to it that has made its appeal to several generations of men and women. Mrs. Radcliffe's sensational romances, Miss Burney's *Evelina* and *Cecilia*, although never likely to be swept into the limbo of literary oblivion, have not gripped the imagination of generation after generation as have *Pride and Prejudice* and its companions, owing to the marvellous vitality which Jane Austen managed to put into them.

From an intellectual and educational point of view early in the nineteenth century the position of woman had greatly improved in England although there was no advance in her legal status. The renown of the French *salons* had fired the ambition, and encouraged the pioneers of other countries,

and feminine tastes and conversation were assuming a more literary tone. What wonder if, with nothing to think about but trivialities, trivialities had formed the basis of their conversation ?

But they were now proving that, given the chance, the more serious-minded among them were eager enough to turn their interest into wider fields ; *salons* during the eighteenth century had been inaugurated in England, following the example of France, and societies started by Mrs. Montagu and others, to which all the most distinguished and clever men of the day were attracted.

Mary Wollstonecraft had written her *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, which must have been a startling innovation to a generation who supposed they had none ! In those days, no less than in much more recent times, the "rights" of women have always been a target for the shafts of men. Mary Wollstonecraft's book is stigmatized later by a Victorian biographer as "giving utterance to startling and extreme opinions respecting marriage." These startling opinions only appear to be a plea for sex equality, for which, as a sufferer under existent law, she understood the urgent need. Feminine protest against the subjection involving injustice and galling limitation, was disclosing unmistakably the quality of the acquiescence that was presumed to be voluntary !

None of these things touched Jane Austen. She continued to portray, not the incidents of life, but the life without incident, of her immediate

surroundings. She painted life as it was to her, not as she would wish it to be.

Her art no doubt turned a life that would otherwise have been drab and uninteresting into something worth living. Her gently ironical wit found an outlet through the characters she created ; had it remained latent for want of opportunity for expression, Jane Austen might well have become an embittered "old maid," sharpening her wits on those around her to every one's discomfort.

There was still a thick cloud of prejudice against publicity for women in any form ; they were expected to find all the stimulus and reward necessary for authorship in a circle of admiring friends. But to court the public eye by producing a book with name appended in the open market was an outrage of the male opinion, that to live unnoticed and unremarked, as the Greek philosopher laid down, was all a woman could desire. This prejudice among the male members of her family—in whose eyes no doubt the *purdah* system had much to recommend it—was a very serious obstacle lying in the path of all feminine writers for certainly the first half of the nineteenth century, an additional difficulty in the already difficult profession of letters and which must incidentally have had its influence in the determining of character. Authorship may have exacted from man the development of genius, perseverance, imagination, and the manual labour of transcription ; it exacted equally all this from woman, with the addition of the determination,

grit and dogged persistence that, owing to her environment, were necessary to bring the seeds she had planted and watered into full bloom.

The world lost something by this crippling of female effort. Until the latter half of the last century, for one woman writing about women, there were, roughly speaking, hundreds of men writing about men—analysing, dissecting, divulging. What they wrote about women was in the main negligible; they created woman as they thought she should be; ideals from their own point of view. Surface studies, an analysis of results, not probing for causes; there was no vital reason why they should. Their happiness, comfort, even life itself, had never been dependent upon a woman's mood, and the woman in fiction was coloured by the natural bias of man's own interests. What he thought she should be, that he said she was—and in nine cases out of ten she was not! It is no wonder that Mary Wollstonecraft's plea for "rights" startled her generation!

Jane Austen's genius sprang more from a power of observation and intuition than intellect, and in spite of the almost universal prejudice against clever women, the duties she shared with her sister regarding the household and daily expenditure were never neglected. In spite of the irritation to which we are all susceptible when recalled from the realms of imaginative creation to sober earth, she performed these duties faithfully, including the care of a delicate mother, writing at first secretly, at odd moments,

wishing no doubt to spare her relations the scandal of a clever woman in the family!—and delighting her sister with witty letters during the latter's absence. Lord Macaulay has compared her to Shakespeare; and if the appreciation of succeeding generations is a criterion of merit, she has every right to a crown that will prove evergreen.

While Jane Austen was showing the world of what woman's mentality and imaginative power were capable in spite of the tradition and suggestion hemming her in, we find a member of the opposite sex frankly expressing his sympathy for the difficulties and discouragement inevitably presented to any woman adopting letters as a career.

In a book published in 1812 called *Calamities of Authors*,¹ a chapter headed, "The Life of an Authoress" opens with the following paragraph embodying the writer's views upon the position of a woman in the literary profession at that period:—

"Of all the sorrows in which the female character may participate there are few more affecting than that of an authoress; often insulated and unprotected in society—with all the sensibilities of the sex to encounter miseries which break the spirits of men; and the inconvenience arising from that delicacy which trembles when it quits its retirement."

Fortunately nowadays women have to a certain extent ceased to tremble! but that immunity is the result of a century's struggle against age-old suggestion. To act or speak in public is often

¹ *Calamities of Authors*. Anon.

the source of a mental torture only to be overcome by a sense of duty ; a torture to which it is true men are also liable, but in their case no years of tradition lie behind, implanting instincts of self-effacement that are very difficult to overrule.

The writer then gives a detailed account of the life and effort of Eliza Ryves, with whom he was personally acquainted and to whom he refers as a *Martyr of Literature*. A woman of genius and of polished manners, she "commenced the life of a female trader in literature."

He asks us—being evidently a person of insight—to picture this modest and delicate woman, belonging to a family of some distinction, attempting to bargain with the booksellers over the price of her manuscripts ; for Miss Ryves had fallen upon evil days, and having failed in the only direction admittedly open to women—the capture of a husband—she was forced to try and turn her gifts to account in the open market. After these occasions, her chronicler tells us, she frequently took to her bed on returning with her rejected manuscripts, worn out with the strain of facing so much that was disagreeable and foreign to her instincts. She wrote for newspapers and got no pay ; she contributed to poetical publications, and received in payment the barren reward of other people's poems ! She could not earn enough for her daily bread. But she would not give in, clinging desperately to the Muse who treated her so badly.

Assured at last that there was a demand for translations, she retired to Islington, and although knowing not one word of French, before she left she had produced a very good translation of Rousseau's *Social Compact*, Raynal's *Letters to the National Assembly*, and De la Croix's *Review of the Constitutions of the Principal States in Europe*, consisting of two large volumes. So great a strain on her mental powers, added to the uncongenial nature of the work, preyed on her health, and her mind—we are told—might be said to have outlived her body.

Faced by the disability of broken health this great soul still remained undaunted: she set to work at a translation of Froissart.

Besides these dry-as-dust self-imposed tasks Miss Ryves wrote several comedies which remained for years in the pigeon-holes of managers too busy on their efforts towards the fulfilment of their own part in evolution to pay any attention to the efforts of others! The authoress was left to feed on hope alternately with despair, her productions being apparently too good for final rejection. A comedy entitled *The Debt of Honour* won the warm approval of both the London theatres of the day, and one manager—to whom all honour is due for putting justice and honesty before self-interest—presented her with a hundred pounds on its acceptance.

Eventually she died in want and solitude, overwhelmed by difficulties in the pursuit of literature

that might have made many a man's heart fail, an example of dogged endeavour and impregnable fortitude, and of the dynamic energies potential in woman, and bound to find vent in some direction. If even failure must have its reaction, we may imagine, perhaps, the reincarnated spirit of Eliza Ryves playing havoc with plate-glass windows in the days of the militant suffragette!

Had she found a "patron" in times when interest stood for so much and woman for so little in the intellectual world, events might have turned out differently; but, though willing enough to stand godfather to a fellow-man, it was a more difficult matter to find any person of weight in the social world of that day ready to risk money and influence on a member of a sex any one of which distinguishing herself intellectually was still regarded more as a freak than an object for admiration.

Fanny Burney was well aware of the disabilities attending letters as a profession for women, and with the ready adaptability of her sex learnt to regard the hindrances as a blessing in disguise.

"To be thwarted acts more often as a spur than a bridle!" she said; and no one should have known better! When after much hesitation and screwing up of courage she broke to her father that she had written a book, although treating the matter indulgently and as of no great moment, he seriously enjoined upon her the importance of anonymity did she succeed in getting it published.

This inviolable anonymity for some time stood between her and the coveted publication, for she was so fearful of its infringement that she would not allow even the publishers she approached into the secret of her name, with the not unnatural consequence that they refused to embark on a venture surrounded with so much mystery. Eventually she accepted an offer of £20—for *Evelina*—munificent enough in those days to an unknown author, and only learnt of the appearance of the book through the newspapers.

In the case of the male writer of fiction it was difficult enough "to arrive" with all the aids of advertisement and publicity, the stimulus of open appreciation and the rewards of fame to act as spur; what pertinacity and dogged resolution must have been needed to keep alight the fires of creative impulse, in spite of the suggestive influence of an environment, condemning woman to be seen—in moderation—but not heard at all, to be a little ashamed of being clever, and never to forget that to be unnoticed and unremarkable should be the summit of female ambition!

In these days of woman's growing independence it is exceedingly difficult to gauge the power of determination demonstrated by the conduct of women such as Eliza Ryves and Fanny Burney, who by their actions directly contradicted the conventional estimation of the inherent qualities of their sex. Men were totally unconscious of, or indifferent to, the paralysing effects of an environ-

ment that even the majority of women accepted as inevitable ; qualities doomed in such conditions to remain latent, they said were not there, judging solely by the absence of results to produce which under such limitations would have been little short of miraculous. Women were proving, had been proving through rare exceptions throughout all ages, that men were wrong in this conclusion, but convention and tradition held their mental outlook in too firm a grip for the exercise of logic or unbiased judgment—added to the ever-present instinct for self-preservation, just as strong and insistent in 1800 as in the far-away days of the Persian Princes.

In evidence of this we have only to look at the more important of the laws regarding women at this time at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Prejudice had lowered its defences to a small extent in the case of unmarried women, and had placed them in somewhat the same position as men in the holding of property—with important reservations. They were still excluded in favour of the male with regard to freehold property. Unless specifically left by will, freehold land descended to every male member of the family before the female could put forward any claim. She had no political nor municipal rights ; and the idea of female suffrage was so unheard of that no clause excluding women from the parliamentary vote was entered in any Act bearing on the subject.¹

¹ *Emancipation of English Women.* W. L. Blease.

We can well imagine how disintegrating Mary Wollstonecraft's plea for equality and women's rights must have appeared to her less advanced contemporaries! We, who have passed through other phases of advocacy for the rights of women, can imagine how she must have been lampooned and ridiculed in the "Press" of her day; the sarcasms, the shafts of wit levelled at her expense. That women should claim rights of any sort has always seemed a source of merriment to the opposite sex. What could women possibly want with them? What would they do with them if they had them?

And with each effort, each failure, she has had to learn another lesson in patience, self-control, acquiescence in what she has felt to be injustice—and to look as though she liked it!

CHAPTER X

INJUSTICE IN LEGISLATION

As late as 1800, and indeed for many succeeding years, a woman on entering the marriage state passed into a condition of subjection little removed from the slavery of the old civilizations. She lost all the independence of action she had acquired as a spinster, and became merged to all intents and purposes in the person of her husband. Matters were so arranged that although theoretically public opinion had seen fit to make certain concessions, her dependence was practically complete. Entire control of the purse-strings is a most effective weapon in clipping wings that might lead to even partial emancipation.

The wife might be what we should now call the real owner of vast acres, but all profits and rents accruing therefrom became her husband's property directly she married. She could neither sell it nor dispose of it by will without his consent. Did she inherit property through intestacy and absence of any direct male heir after marriage her husband became automatically the owner of her legacy. Is it surprising that in Mary Wollstonecraft a protesting voice should have been found, raised in vain so many years before ?

All her so-called personal property was his, and did she predecease him everything remained his to dispose of as he chose, unless specially provided for by settlement; and even settlements carefully excluded a woman from touching her own money. Leasehold property came under the same category, and he could dispose of it during her life or after without asking her consent.

To be classed in law with minors and lunatics is not conducive to a sturdy self-respect, and that women were in such circumstances able to maintain any self-respect at all is little short of marvellous. Imagine the trial of patience and power of self-control to an intelligent, capable woman, in the assumption that she was not only unfit to manage her own affairs but even to give an opinion as to how they should be managed! Where the husband was affectionate and indulgent a portion of, possibly her own, money was allotted to her in the form of an allowance; withheld, and only obtained through the arts of flattery and persuasion, where he was less amiable.

Such a woman's life, had she any spirit at all, was a long grind of unceasing humiliation. Until 1870 these conditions with trifling changes held good, the husband being entitled to the entire disposal, not only of his wife's property but of her earnings!¹ Where did the position differ from that of the old-time slave? It appears almost laughable from to-day's standpoint that

¹ Married Women's Property Act, 1870.

such "comic-opera" legislation should have been instituted and defended by serious minds. And women, conscious of inherent powers within, knowing themselves to be responsible human beings—those of them in the van of evolutionary progress—were quite aware of this comic side of it; there are "things that every woman knows"—has always known—that have curled many a lip, brought a genuine twinkle to many an eye, in a gentle raillery at man-made institutions; but the touch of humour was but skin-deep, while the iron of it entered into her soul.

In 1800 in other respects also we might have been back in the days of ancient Rome. The wife was expected to keep rigidly her marriage vows, could get no redress when her fidelity was not reciprocated. She could get no divorce from the Civil, and a separation only from the Ecclesiastical courts, and then without permission to marry again. A man might sin against his marriage vow, and owing to the legal conditions no less than conventional habit and opinion, the censure dealt out to him was hardly more than nominal, except in very aggravated cases. The law was carefully framed to give the man full licence, the woman none at all.

But as marriage was held up as the alpha and omega of woman's ambition; as, in the absence of educational training, it actually was the only "profession" open to a girl whose parents could not leave her adequately provided for, whether

her inclination lay towards it or not, she was carefully kept in profound ignorance of what marriage really meant. There must during the last century have been countless women, coerced through circumstances into marriage, who would have preferred to remain in the comparative freedom of the unmarried state. With no facilities for education, no profession open, society considering it beneath her dignity, and a reflection on her parents, for her to earn an income of her own, and at their death leaving her often quite unprovided for, what was she to do but live on some one's charity—and the position of the “poor relation” has passed into a proverb—starve or marry?

A good mother's first care was to get her daughter well married. She was brought up deliberately with this end in view, carefully trained to catch a husband—for it was nothing less, camouflage it euphoniously as you will. And yet many a high-spirited, intelligent girl must have hesitated to pass into the bondage of matrimonial “bliss.”

It was only shortly before the end of the previous century that the law was repealed permitting a man to beat his wife, but he still retained the privilege of locking her up with impunity. If she killed him—and she must often have been tempted to do so!—it was *Petit Treason*, for which a wife was burnt alive; hanging was substituted as a concession on the side of mercy in 1790. She was not the legal guardian of her own children—

is not to this day—her husband having the power to appoint by will any guardian he might choose ; in the case of intestacy the nearest male relative became the legal guardian, an iniquitous condition of affairs which still exists ; except in cases of illegitimacy when all responsibilities and obligations were transferred to the woman's shoulders.

And the curious part of it was, that woman was supposed to be content with these conditions ! Not that she was ever asked ; it was taken for granted, that because she had no chance to speak, she had nothing to say. Illumination in this respect might surely—if it had been desired—have been forthcoming in the periodical outbreaks of volcanic rebellion in which Vashti set so spirited an example ; the bid for freedom in the wish of the Greek women to join the forbidden ranks of the *hetæraæ* ; the Roman ladies accredited with a conspiracy to poison their husbands ; the outbreak of “blue-stockings” in France drawing upon themselves the barbed shafts of Molière's sarcasm ; and Miss Wollstonecraft's appeal in the eighteenth century, to mention a few historical occasions upon which women have found their voice and expressed their discontent unequivocally. Private and individual rebellion has never ceased to exist, the kicking against the prick of a disabling environment, but laws all in favour of the opposite sex, by their suggestion, directing the bias of public opinion, rendered protest futile and even undignified.

With so much that was disadvantageous in her

past, to the achievement of full expression of the self, woman surely according to the laws of reaction must have an equal force to her credit. It may possibly be that but for this undercurrent of rebellion on the part of the more advanced, cropping up in generation after generation, under the galling limitations, that woman's inherent powers of mentality and the latent potentialities of brain-expansion would have atrophied, and she would have become, in fact, the cipher in civil and political life and in the world of art and literature that man presupposed her. Not that certain basic impulses would have ever died out, but that the means for their expression would have become atrophied through disuse. Man's brain had been evolving through the stress of his struggle with matter, and the spur of education; woman's brain has had comparatively little stimulus to develop at all except what she herself has individually provided in spite of stultifying surroundings. Temperamental bases are never totally eradicated, hence man's easy return to barbarism. They can be controlled or concealed—sometimes even from himself—by the superimposing of other qualities, or possibly through the coercion of legislation, or induced consciously or unconsciously by the exercise of self-control, which is the keynote of civilization.

Man has always remained in closer touch with barbarism than woman has for obvious reasons. Conditions in which the strong right arm is the determining force naturally make a greater appeal

to him—conditions in which from a purely material or sex point of view he has all to gain, woman all to lose. In the mass man is at heart every bit as much a hunter to-day as he was in the Stone Age. His instincts are to war with matter, to master the elements, defend his own. He is seen at his best in heroic settings; he longs to subdue, whether it be the forces of nature or his own kind. He loves the feeling of power, of supremacy; it is the impulse that prompts a small boy to pull the legs off flies, rather than wanton cruelty for cruelty's sake. Conscious of latent strength, a healthy normal man craves to express it.

Barbarism, or man in primitive conditions, permits this, encourages it, gives privilege to the strong; civilization restrains it, teaches him to control it, weans him from ethical standards that uphold the survival of the fittest, the extinction of lame dogs, and teaches him to keep the display of primitive passions in check; it cries to the God in him to respect the tyranny of weakness. Civilization defrauds the strong arm of its birth-right, but it can never kill out the primitive instinct.

The young man, virile, eager to show his prowess, his supremacy over other men, to prove his quality, welcomes war—before he becomes familiar with its horrors—as his natural vocation, his most congenial means of expression, and in war reverts at once to primitive man, giving rein to primitive instincts, discarding more or less in an astonishingly brief moment the veneer of civilization

accumulated through long centuries. He despises the carpet knight, the "conscientious objector," be he never so learned and proficient in the arts. He plays at soldiers in the nursery, not at courts—unless he can be King and chop his courtiers' heads off at will.

In the early days of the march towards the individualization of humanity, war undoubtedly *was* his vocation, the fulcrum through which the Creator decreed he was to obtain the reactions necessary to his development. The qualities requisite for successful incursion into your neighbour's territory and defence of your own, could only be developed by the pitting of brain and sinew against that neighbour's. Humanity without war would have remained invertebrate as a jelly-fish. The primitive modes of warfare with tooth and nail, the armed struggle for food and place, may be succeeded by a more subtle war of brain against brain, entailing the shedding of tears perhaps rather than of blood, but war nevertheless. This world will surely always be a battleground in some form, although the performances may become less spectacular.

While certain proclivities of both mind and body required a development only to be obtained through strife and struggle, in so doing he was fulfilling the law of his being; but as civilization advanced and control of those proclivities became his first duty to himself and others, there is no doubt that war, so far from proving a blessing,

has been a serious set-back to any civilized community. The set-back means a return to barbarism, of which one of the first indications is the old cry of the subjection of woman, and the superiority of the sex with the strong right arm. The effort to re-establish the ascendancy of might over what an advancing evolution has decreed to be right, is a sign of degeneracy and the recrudescence of a sex-monopoly of privilege, worthy only of our ancestors of the Stone Age.

This recrudescence resultant from the influences of war was noticeable after the fall of the Greek and Roman Empire, both of which woman had through the overmastery of environment and exercise of her inherent abilities assisted to establish. The panic that she might prove a serious rival led the male population of the later Roman Empire to repeal the laws extending her rights and privileges, and the subsequent downfall of civilization is an eloquent testimony to the general benevolence of woman's influence. During the Dark and early Middle Ages when Europe was scarcely ever at peace, nations were struggling for self-expression no less than individuals, more or less barbaric conditions prevailed, and woman was again regarded as an inferior order of being to be kept in strict subjection and practical slavery.

Again, after the French Revolution the pure and brilliant flame kindled in France by the force of woman's intellect and strength of character was extinguished by the breath of a mob reverting

for the moment to rank barbarism. For two centuries and more she had been vindicating her powers of mentality and beneficent influence on letters when given the opportunity to exhibit them; had been actively contradicting man's assertion that her brain was incapable of serious effort beyond matters connected with the household. With women prominent in literature France had risen to eminence as the nation predominant in letters and culture, and the centre of advanced thought and opinion. Her influence had tended in France especially, and to a lesser degree in England, to eliminate much of the coarseness prevalent in the literature of the eighteenth century.

What the French Revolution began the fifteen years of European war finished, and surely never in the whole history of the sex's evolution had woman's subjection to man and the inferiority of the sex been more assiduously and piously impressed—in the Western world—through continual suggestion, upon minds moulded by a restricted environment, than during the early and middle period of the nineteenth century.

In the early Victorian woman we find a reflection of Esther the submissive, awaiting the extension of her husband's sceptre before presuming to advance into his presence. The laws relating to women suggested it, man asserted it directly and by implication, and women eager to placate him, anxious to get daughters married—an imperative duty in a society that forbade female

independence and cast a slur on "old maids"—helpless under the disadvantage of an indifferent education, and with no command of money, succumbed to the suggestion and conventional prejudice of their age, and whatever their private opinions may have been, preached to their daughters subjection to the masculine will—with special lessons on the management of husbands.

I quote from a book, written by Mrs. Ellis to Englishwomen, dedicated to Queen Victoria, of which the sub-title is, *Relative duties, domestic influence and social obligations*,¹ published about the middle of the last century, and running to many editions. After referring very solemnly in a previous page to the "respect and reverence" due to a husband, the writer continues :

"One important truth sufficiently impressed upon your mind will materially assist in this desirable consummation—it is the superiority of your husband simply because he is a man. It is quite possible you may have more talent, with higher attainments, and you may also have been more generally admired ; but this has nothing whatever to do with your position as a woman, which is, and must be, inferior to his as a man."

With unconscious humour the authoress adds :

"For want of a satisfactory settlement on this point before marriage, how many disputes and misunderstandings have ensued, filling, as with the elements of discord and strife, that world

¹ *Wives of England*. Mrs. Ellis.

of existence which ought to be a smiling Eden of perpetual flowers."

A one-sided Eden, when it involved apparently absolute self-effacement on the part of Eve!

That even the Victorian sisterhood was not meekly acquiescent under these decrees may be gathered from Mrs. Ellis's previous admonitions, disclosing a view of matrimony before which the stoutest feminine heart might well have quailed. For the benefit of young girls about to embark upon the venture, she says—as from woman to woman, referring to the marriage state: "Depend upon it, if your faults were never brought to light before, they will be now. Are you expecting to be always indulged? Depend upon it, if your temper was never tried before, it will be so now. Are you expecting to be always admired? Depend upon it, if you were never humble and insignificant before, you will have to be so now. Yes, you had better make up your mind at once, to be uninteresting as long as you live, to all except the companion of your home; and well will it be for you if you can always be interesting to him."

A bright outlook! To the early Roman wife the Victorian must have waved a sympathetic hand across the centuries. "If you persist in your determination to be married, you shall not only be satisfied, but cheerful to have these things so," Mrs. Ellis goes on.

The wonder was that any woman did persist! We can only hope the writer took an unnecessarily pessimistic view of the early Victorian husband!

CHAPTER XI

PARASITES AND "HYENAS IN PETTICOATS"

As an interpretation of the accepted opinion of the day on the position of women the *Wives of England* is worthy of further study. In it, clothed in euphemism, distorted from crude truth by convenient explanations, we can find the foundations of much that men consider so unaccountable in the feminine character; although the sentiments and rules laid down by Mrs. Ellis with regard to their relations with men can only excite ridicule and frank amusement to-day from both sexes, the tragedy at the back of it can be spelt easily enough by any woman who troubles herself to do so.

The keynote of Mrs. Ellis's philosophy all through is the emphatic assertion of the inferiority of her sex, and exhortations to keep the fact for ever in remembrance. The very eagerness of her reiterations argues her suspicion of black sheep in the fold, Vashtis and Mary Wollstonecrafts lurking in corners waiting to spring their devastating doctrines upon an otherwise submissive and acquiescent generation. We can imagine the favour

with which the book must have been regarded by what she herself calls "the nobler sex," and it must be remembered she was only echoing opinions born of man-made laws that classed married women with minors and lunatics, and robbed them of all privileges as responsible individuals. So strong is suggestion, constantly reiterated—psychologists are learning something of its power to-day—that woman herself became encased in an impenetrable fog of distorted values, twisting the facts of evolution and her own place in the universe into grotesque proportions; and this, moreover, without any attempt to find a logical foundation for statements bald and on the surface utterly unconvincing.

The curse of Eve of course, taken literally as all orthodox Christians were expected to take it, then loomed large as the unanswerable evidence of Almighty decree, the ultimate appeal of any question of ethics; but the fact that man also was cursed was never taken into consideration. He was condemned to dig for his dinner, and as he has endeavoured unceasingly ever since to get some one else to do it for him, why should not woman be at equal liberty to try and shake off the shackles that bind her? Why is she to bow submissively to the "Divine Will," while man is permitted to fight himself free?

But as woman was not credited with the sense of logic, her arguments were presupposed to be without weight, and no one listened to her.

Under the heading "The Peculiarities of Men," Mrs. Ellis is more scathing in her implications than she intends to be, forgetting in anxiety to instruct young women in the management of husbands the colours in which she is painting the latter; she never fails, however, to clothe her criticism in "respectful" language. For instance, when warning the young wife not to arouse her husband's temper we are told:

"What then, if by perpetual provocation she should awaken the tempest of his wrath!" a much more dignified term than "temper!" "We will not contemplate the thought, for there is something as fearful in his indignation, as there is attractive in his kindness, and flattering in his esteem."

I am afraid the modern husband does not find "the tempest of his wrath" as awe-inspiring as Mrs. Ellis would have wished!

Again, the young wife is admonished not to attempt to shine in public herself, but to draw out "by the most delicate attentions how much she finds her husband superior to herself," not for the purpose of display, "but by a respectful reference to his opinion, a willingly imposed silence when he speaks . . . and by a judicious turn sometimes given to the conversation, so that his information and intelligence may be drawn forth for the benefit of others," but she makes the reservation that these pearls are only to be expected from male lips if he be a specially enlightened member of his sex.

Still holding on to her watchwords "Respect and reverence," Mrs. Ellis defines proper wifely conduct on the occasions when a man complains of his food, which she says most men consider themselves justly entitled to do—a fault that rather than cast a slur on the "nobler sex," she attributes to his upbringing, and, therefore, his mother. If, idle and irritable, he should sit before the fire, "occasionally jarring all the fire-irons together with a stroke of his foot," she is still—respectful and reverential—to control her temper and keep the domestic peace—and, we may conclude, collect the fire-irons and put them back in their places. Wives are also instructed how to keep a man soothed and undisturbed during the delicate situations presented by spring-cleaning, and how he is to be respectfully reconducted into paths of virtue when he takes to gambling.

She also expatiates at great length on the chastening influence of an unpunctual man who nevertheless exacts strict punctuality from others, especially the feminine portion of his family. He may be late for every meal, but should he by chance be one day punctual, the meal must be ready. This type is not altogether unknown outside the Victorian era, but in these degenerate and flippant days, this erring member of the "nobler sex" generally finds the meal has been—disrespectfully—begun without him.

Mrs. Ellis, moreover, points out that these offences, although of little importance in man,

if woman should develop them the penalty will be the forfeiture of her husband's affection. Evidently in undertaking an early Victorian husband, woman had to be prepared for the worst!

In the matter of infidelity to the marriage vow, she was expected to bear all with quiet resignation; rules for her behaviour in such circumstances amount to making the best of a bad job, and while the law failed to come to her assistance there was nothing else to be done. Inequality of censure was the prevailing system as it had been in the early days of Greece and Rome; man, so long as he did it decently, could do what he liked, while woman ate her heart out, and bitterly rued the day she had given it into his keeping. Women have always given hostages to fortune with both hands, and probably always will, despite all the Mrs. Ellises in creation.

A husband could lock his wife up if she proved rebellious, and in any case had command of all the sinews of war did she attempt practical expostulation or wish to leave him. Her position was hopeless, unless relations would give her a home, and the first thought of the relations of that day was to hush up a family scandal at any price, no matter at what cost to the woman. Her only alternative in the pursuit of freedom was to go out penniless into a world that gives nothing for nothing, or possibly, in aggravated cases, obtain a separation through canon law, which of course did not permit her to remarry. The effects pro-

duced by this crying injustice had not only practical results, but the suggestion conveyed and the weight of conventional opinion must have had deep moral effects, in many cases arousing a passionate protest in women's souls of which until the present century men have had little idea.

Even Mrs. Ellis betrays a touch of exasperation here and there, in her exhortation to women to cultivate all the virtues if they hope to make a success of marriage. Early in the book, a young enthusiast discussing the prospects of matrimony cries in reply to the pessimistic appraisal of the Victorian conditions by Mrs. Ellis, "What, shall we not even *hope* to be happy?"

"Yes," Mrs. Ellis replies. "Let us hope as long as we can!" and goes on to explain the slender foundations on which that hope is built; later on, in an expansive moment, she assures young women the best preparation for marriage is to make a careful study of patience from the Book of Job!

That all women were not imbued with so pessimistic an outlook as Mrs. Ellis presents to us goes without saying, and there were probably as fair a proportion of happy marriages then as now or during previous centuries, but in even the happiest unions, owing to the prevailing conditions, far less of satisfying content fell to the woman than man knew. It was generally "making the best of it." A review of woman's attitude as betrayed by those among them who have left a

record of their opinions and emotions will point, certainly not to a sublime acquiescence in man's assumption of their inferiority and subjection, but rather to the disciplinary effects that such conditions must necessarily have produced, bearing fruit in qualities which should prove of inestimable value now that the feminine element is to have part in the government of the nation. That the marriages were happy was certainly in most cases due to the self-effacement of what Mrs. Ellis would doubtless have called the "junior" partner; her adaptability—a convenient term for unselfishness—sense of duty, and the love that can forget itself in others, being the soil from which the roots of domestic peace and comfort drew their sustenance.

Although to a succeeding generation the attitude of Mrs. Ellis and others of her sort may appear exceedingly amusing, and although we do not believe the Victorian husband to have been so black as, in her zeal to advocate the subjection of her sex, she incidentally paints him!—the prevailing laws and the influence of suggestion must have created an atmosphere tragically restricting and galling to women of either spirit or reason, striving towards self-expression. Any woman of discernment to-day, with her wider opportunities and civic privileges, cannot but realize that in the enforced suppression of qualities she is now proving herself to have possessed, and which history shows have always cried out for expression, the environ-

ment in which she was entangled during the first half of the last century was as limiting and demoralizing, demanding as much, or even more, self-discipline and sacrifice as that of any previous era. Frank barbarism, with might as right, would have been a situation less subtle in its demands upon her adaptability to conditions imposed by others, and surrender of all claim for recognition as a responsible individual. Except in a moderate improvement in the standards of education during the early part of the nineteenth century—the higher education for women was still a dream of the future—her craving for opportunity for expansion, initiative and expression was never more strenuously denied than during the reign of Queen Victoria. Never had conditions and prevalent opinion so combined to make of her the parasite that in his bitterer moods man has called her. Her training through the doctrine of her inferiority has been calculated to bring out the qualities that go towards the making of a parasite; insincerity, an invertebrate dependence, cowardice, and all those arts called, when between wife and husband, throwing dust in the eyes, when between nation and nation—diplomacy. In Dr. Gregory's advice to his daughters—in any mother's advice to her daughters at that period we find the same note, the echo of the chord struck by the men of old in their dismay at Vashti's revolt.

To please and placate the opposite sex was to be the sum total of women's aims. Her life before

marriage was a careful pretence ; from the nursery door she was taught to conceal her real feelings, her own opinions, did they not conform rigidly to accepted conventional standards. Did she find any one man's society particularly congenial she must profess indifference, because man prefers to be the hunter ; in a hundred ways her natural instincts were trimmed into a decorous artificiality, her face taught to conceal emotions, not to betray them, her manners schooled into affectations until she herself hardly knew the difference between the real and the false. Men having a prejudice against clever women, she must profess to be feather-headed—Mrs. Ellis is very strong on this point—and more serious still, a point which will be more fully dealt with later on, she was kept in a state of shocking ignorance with regard to the facts of life, because men preferred her with the bloom of “innocence” undimmed. Mrs. Ellis frankly recommends the young woman about to marry to keep any previous love-affairs, however trivial, to herself, as likely to be a bone of contention her husband might worry later on. She was to dress for the benefit of men in general before marriage, for the man in particular after ; caps, and shawls, and a place by the fender, was the lot assigned to her after attaining the age of thirty. Her opinion counted for nothing outside the front door ; and not overmuch within ; while unmarried, the newspapers were not considered fit reading for her, and there was certainly little

incentive to read about affairs of state in which she had no part, and about which a dutiful wife was only supposed to echo her husband's opinions.

Is it to be supposed the Victorian woman acquiesced more gladly in this debasing environment than her forerunners of Greece, of Rome, or of the Renaissance that through unremitting struggle saw woman's foot on the lower rungs of the ladder to better conditions? Can we be surprised that Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* made no appeal to a generation suffering from the reaction of fifteen years' war, and bore no fruit until half a century lay between us and its first appearance?

And yet she asked for so little; explained so carefully women were putting forward no plea to govern men, only to govern themselves; complained that the degradation of the atmosphere of pretence which surrounded her sex, an atmosphere created by man and man's desire for self-development, inevitably resulted in an insincerity, dissimulation and want of self-respect in woman which he has been the first to stigmatize.

Dr. Gregory is also, in the legacies he has left us of his opinions, a fine example of prevalent ideas on the subject of the "inferior" sex. In his advice to his daughters on the snaring of husbands, delicacy of constitution was supposed to be an essential of refinement in women as a foil for man's superior strength. So the early Victorian maiden was told to cultivate fainting fits and

megrims, tremors of the heart and all sorts of sensations foreign to her nature in the endeavour to feed man's vanity. A show of cowardice was also in his prescription, so women cowered abjectly in thunderstorms, and fled discomfited from their own shadows that man might show his prowess in their defence! Dr. Gregory counsels a girl "not to dance with spirit when gaiety of heart would make her feet eloquent" as betraying either too much independence of masculine protection or a want of modesty!

Even the preachers held up to women the virtue of making themselves agreeable to men, considering perhaps an appeal through their complexions likely to carry more weight than through their moral sense. Dr. Fordyce in one of his sermons urges as one of the advantages of piety its beneficial effects on the face and figure. "Never," he says, "perhaps does a fine woman strike more deeply than when composed into pious recollection . . ."! He also advises a wife never to admit the strength of her love for a husband—advice that strayed even into the latter part of the century as a tradition from Victorian mothers. Dr. Fordyce should have known that if a woman does not herself divine what to admit and what not to admit to her own husband, no man on earth is going to teach her!

If women happened to have any intelligence or learning—he mentions this only as an off-chance—they are recommended to keep it a profound

secret—"especially from the men, who generally look with a jealous and malignant eye on a woman of great parts and a cultivated understanding," and Dr. Fordyce may be presumed to have known his own sex.

Rousseau's opinion of women is well known, but if his own intelligence and power of judgment are to be gauged by his selection of a wife we may consider his opinion negligible!

The early Victorian woman's life was one long pose, sanctioned and encouraged by man in the mass as contributing to his own welfare and self-satisfaction, and bitterly resented by him as an individual when, betrayed by the resultant cunning and instability of some unscrupulous member of the opposite sex, he found himself hoist by his own petard. It is not surprising that Mary Wollstonecraft's plea for "Rights" should have fallen upon this generation of false values, prejudice and unjust legislation with "startling" effect or that a last-century biographer should have described her as ill-balanced and ill-regulated¹—a convenient epithet applied to women-pioneers of all ages.

That *The Vindication of the Rights of Women* should have weathered the storm of indignant protest which greeted it and its author is sufficient testimony to the righteousness of its cause. Mary Wollstonecraft lived a hundred years before her time. Her claims would be considered nowadays

¹ *Harmsworth's Encyclopædia.*

only reasonable and just. She asked for a share in the government of her sex—so that women caring for their own children should have the opportunity of caring also for those of others; that she should be in a position to remedy some crying evils that were festering and multiplying because they were not brought out into the open and faced. She pointed out how conventional opinion, and man's instinct to keep woman in subjection, in denying her the right to earn a living wage, were forcing her to accept one of two alternatives—to secure a husband to support her at any sacrifice to her self-respect, or to drift into all the horrors of prostitution.¹

Imagine the force of character, the courage required to urge these claims before a generation still faithful to Dr. Johnson's opinion that portrait painting was indelicate in a woman as it entailed an immodest study of the faces of men! Her whole soul must have been in a condition of seething revolt against the conditions imposed upon her sex to have stimulated her into a public protest which was only too certain to bring contumely and malicious criticism. There were doubtless many women of her own generation, conscious of promptings within that were never allowed to fructify, or suffering from the injustice of one-sided legislation, who were with her heart and soul; but there were also those of her own sex—as there are to

¹ *Vindication of the Rights of Women.* Mary Wollstonecraft.

this day—who, spreading nets in the approved fashion for the catching of husbands, or with feet comfortably extended on the domestic hearth, no fiery longings towards higher levels than the purely material, and a complacent indifference to the wrongs inflicted on other women by the limitation of their environment, joined in the gibes directed against this “unspeakable rebel” against established convention, and the assumption of equality between the sexes. A stern sense of duty nerved her to a thankless task, but her memory has lived no less than her book and a more enlightened generation has vindicated the character of the courageous pioneer, whom Mrs. Henry Fawcett calls an essentially womanly woman, while her contemporary Horace Walpole refers to her as “a hyena in petticoats”!

CHAPTER XII

ENVIRONMENT OF THE VICTORIAN WOMAN

The fact that the whole mass of women did not succumb to the influence of this disastrous environment points in itself to the inherent nature of certain qualities in the sex. In the slough of so much that was pernicious and demoralizing the marvel is that any of them were able to walk with clean feet. The more frivolous-minded and selfishly disposed adapted themselves readily enough to the convenient policy of flattery and dissimulation in order to serve their own ends, but to the thinkers, the pioneers, the self-respecting, the circumstances calling for self-control, patience and a great courage did not call in vain. The majority among the more educated never sank to the level to which it would seem the prevailing standards must lead. They submitted because in the absence of all possible appeal it was inevitable, but they raised standards of their own and tried to live up to them. The disciplinary effects of life in such conditions are self-evident and could not fail to bring definite results in the long run.

The status of woman during the first half of

the last century showed but little improvement on the days when Molière painted his ideal who, if learned, was to hide her knowledge, to have *savoir faire* without betraying it—to bestow on others in fact all the advantages to be derived from her wit and intelligence and ask for no reward. Her distinction in intellect during those two brilliant centuries in France was to count for nothing; her position as an individual with “rights” was to be but little altered from the time the traditional curse was laid upon her, with the additional sting that time and education had helped her to find her voice, had made her even more acutely alive to the injustices and limitations hemming in all effort and independence, while the remedy was still beyond her reach. The cave-woman, so long as she was fed and housed, and other cave-women did not poach on her preserves as a wife, probably considered an all-wise Providence—symbolized by the Totem at the cave door—had done all that could be expected of Him on her behalf. It was for civilization and the education it brings to teach her that self-expression is as much her birthright as that of the other sex, that the desire within her towards individualization had as much right to bear blossom and fruit.

Man would have once retorted that there lay an excellent reason for keeping her in ignorance; just as once the higher education of the working man was opposed on the grounds that it would make him discontented with his walk in life. But

to-day, even among the most pronounced reactionaries there are not many who would dare to uphold the opinion that anyone should be kept in a stultifying ignorance lest there should be no one left to do spade-work for the benefit of others. Nor would any intelligent man giving his serious opinion deliberately advocate keeping women systematically in a condition of ignorance, lest the Tree of Knowledge should open their eyes to their own wrongs, and furnish them with a weapon wherewith to put them right ; even if it should incidentally unfit her to conduce to his comfort—which it assuredly will not—or consent to his vices.

The man of to-day is of finer fibre, less subject to the influence of past centuries of suggestion, more clear-eyed and conscious of what constitutes true chivalry, although for the moment the war we have just passed through may still be casting an evil shadow of a former barbarism over the whole world.

The present generation of womanhood is inclined to level shafts of ridicule at her Victorian predecessors—to despise the tame submission to masculine decree, and to symbolize in the word “doormat” an attitude that fills her with contempt and exasperation. She laughs at the vapours, the faintings, the pose of delicacy of physique that were the artificial products of an environment of which she can have little conception in her present conditions of comparative freedom.

But she must remember it was the Victorian

woman to whom, in great part, she owes that freedom—struggling against circumstances, grasping at every opportunity, fighting during the earlier days, for the most part silently, welding into her womanhood all the qualities eminently fitted for use in the government of her country ; the Victorian woman who, raising her voice periodically in spite of obstacles, gradually broke through the crust of past suggestion, and prepared the world for new ideals ; who protested vehemently against unjust legislation, against inequality in moral obligations, against the subjection that condemned her to the everlasting and ignoble pretence of being other than she is—at the risk of being called unsexed, unreasonable, a “hyena in petticoats” ; who, if she even whispered of “rights,” was caricatured in comic papers, in which the very dogs were made to flee down drains at sight of her !

Modern woman owes an eternal debt to those women behind her all through the ages, from Vashti to Mary Wollstonecraft, and above all to the Victorians whose steady protests—“doormats” though they may have seemed—dropping at intervals wore the stone of opposition, if not away, at any rate into much less formidable proportions, and made every step in advance to-day easier of achievement. The names of prominent women who rose above circumstances and helped to alter the trend of public opinion tell their own tale of effort to free their sex from the cramping effects of a past and present environment. It required no small

strength of mind to face the opprobrium, the ridicule, sometimes even the physical dangers of advocating openly a doctrine so eminently unwelcome and distasteful to the sex in whose hands lays the reins of power and government.

The degenerating effects of the fifteen years of war were noticeable during the first half of the century, not only in the renewal of the cry of woman's subjection, and in the stagnation of the movement for improving her position in law and social privileges, but in the pause that took place in her advancement intellectually. We hear of no literary *salons* in those days ; Jane Austen, Maria Edgeworth, Fanny Burney and their contemporaries flourished in the aftermath of the brilliant achievement of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and were already making their mark when Europe was passing through the disintegrating conditions of the fifteen years' war ; it was not until nearly the middle of the nineteenth century that Mrs. Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë claimed the attention of the literary world, both leaving behind witnesses to woman's genius in literature that will never die. And they were but the beginning ; since then many names could be quoted to prove that man's assumption in past ages of the inherent incapacity of the female brain to rival his own in at all events that particular field of intellect was unfounded, and her want of success had been due to want of opportunity.

All through the last century her road to success was more liberally bestrewn with obstacles than man's ; in the first place by reason of the ignorance of the world in which it was ordained she should be kept—an ignorance which was unjustifiable and subtly cruel in its effects ; and, secondly, by the prejudice that still sturdily flourished against women making any bid for independence through earning money, or inviting public attention. This may possibly have been considered to cast a reflection on the man as unable to provide adequately for the women of his family, but certainly until the seventies and eighties of the last century it was much more dignified to live on the charity of reluctant relatives, or to fade out unobtrusively through inanition.

The ignorance of the facts of life which was supposed to enhance the charms of maidenhood in man's eyes, and in which girls were carefully kept during the Victorian era, was the root of a more subtle mischief, striking more deeply at fundamentals, and responsible for much of which man has been entirely unaware. In his abysmal ignorance of feminine psychology he has always presumed woman's " adaptability " to circumstances argued acquiescence, never recognizing in the rebellion, covert and open, breaking out through past centuries a visible contradiction of a willing submission. It has always been difficult for him to imagine the reaction consequent on the mind and whole character

of an "innocent" girl who took upon herself the bonds of matrimony without the least suspicion that a man's past was not as blameless as her own. This was not only the incidental result of the training of any "well-brought-up" girl, but the deliberate intention of the system, and the devastating effects of the subsequent enlightenment have shaken to its foundations many a woman's sense of duty and justice. The passion of resentment, the reckless desire to make the balance even at any cost, the shattering of cherished ideals, has been at the back of more divorces than might be suspected where self-control and so-called "adaptability" were wanting.

I am not asking whether the circumstances were justifiable or unavoidable; I am only stating the facts from the woman's point of view. The girl of the last century was so sedulously sheltered from all knowledge of the world and its ways that when life itself opened her eyes she was utterly unprepared and defenceless. Her reading was censored, newspapers forbidden that might disclose the unpleasant by-ways of existence; the flaming sword of parental vigilance and conventional opinion dividing her from the Tree of Knowledge. The shock of disillusionment has turned many a young girl's world grey for the time being, and although calling upon all her powers of self-control and a firm resolution to face the inevitable, it killed something in her that could never be brought to life again.

In a book by Emma Marshall, *In Four Reigns : The Recollections of Althea Allingham*, we read a frank account of woman's opinion on these matters, and of how far they were from a voluntary assent to these conventions when knowledge had come to them in advance. The book covers the years between 1785 and 1842 and is apparently a biography simply written of the family of Allingham. Stella Allingham as a young girl, having informed herself of the accepted inequalities of censure with regard to the lives of man and of woman previous to matrimony, turns her back on an "eligible" suitor, in a manner that to the uninitiated appeared quite unaccountable.

The plaint of the rejected suitor is indicative of current opinion. He complains a friend must have betrayed him, but that his past had not been more unscrupulous than that of his neighbour. "Surely," he says, "I am not to be thrust aside for the little escapades of youth! It is not fair—it is not generous. I appeal to you to say if it be fair or generous!"—and this from a man who would have been the last to be "fair or generous" had the escapades been on the other side!

"It seems impossible," he goes on arguing his point with Stella's mother, "that for a mere chimera your daughter should refuse to listen to me," the "mere chimera" being a trumped-up marriage and a woman and child left to face the world alone!

Stella's mother, knowing nothing of this, nor the

grounds for her daughter's objections, seeks the opinion of a man of the world, "who when pressed as to the rejected one's character could only stroke his chin and settle the bow of his high black stock and answer—that the man was all right—no worse than his neighbours, perhaps a trifle better—the girl was very lucky!"

Stella's mother adds that as his ideas of what made a desirable husband were so utterly at variance with hers, she gave up in despair, succumbing hopelessly to the iron hand of a convention which, with all legislation and tradition against her, she could not hope to overrule.

Stella refuses to marry him, her eyes having been opened, although confessing her love.

"It was all a mistake," she says, ". . . you do not know what the depths of trouble are to a woman who sees her idol is mere clay, and that she has been deceived."

I have no wish to dwell upon this particular phase of the relations between the sexes; suffice it to say that where real love existed it often received a shock that on occasion proved disintegrating in its effects, but in the majority of cases turned women's eyes to higher planes, and in a curious inexplicable fashion imbued the more earthly side of their love with a protective element. The nobility of forgiveness on the woman's part has always been prominently advocated, and truly a want of it can never be thrown in her face. It is easier to forgive than to forget, and where

the need for forgiveness arises the quality of a woman's love can never be the same again. Something has been destroyed for ever, past her reviving or anyone else's. Romance has fled, and no one can ever put him back on his pedestal. The heights of forbearance expected from women, and the depths of humiliation they were expected to suffer from the accepted standards of man's immorality both before and after marriage, can be guessed at on reading Lord Halifax's *Advice to a Daughter*—written, it is true, a hundred years previously, but still the standard expected to be tolerated in men during the early part of the Victorian era, before it was possible for women to obtain more than a judicial separation through the ecclesiastical courts. In speaking of man's infidelities Lord Halifax addresses his daughter in the following remarkable fashion :—

1“ Do not seem to look or hear that way. . . . To expostulate in these Cases, looketh like declaring War, and preparing Reprisals ; which to a thinking Husband would be a dangerous Reflection. . . . An affected Ignorance, which is seldom a Vertue, is a great one here. . . . Besides, it will naturally make him more yielding in other things.”

A truly noble standard of behaviour for both sexes !

Until 1839 there seems to have been no alteration in the laws regarding woman, with any idea of increasing her independence ; all that was done was

¹ *Emancipation of English Women.* W. L. Blease.

entirely from the wife and mother standpoint. The only legislation granting what might be called a privilege—as a step towards equality—had been in the Act which made an unmarried woman liable to bankruptcy under the same conditions as man. This privilege was not extended to married women, who were still placed among the incapables as before—although why marriage should have been presumed to put them necessarily on a par with lunatics and idiots I leave to the other sex to explain !

But the attitude in which the world regards them has far-reaching effects upon the minds of both men and women, and during the earlier half of the nineteenth century it would have been almost impossible for women to have risen superior to the very questionable level of dignity expected of the sex. An immense moral courage was necessary to defy public opinion, the limitations of convention narrower than in this broader-minded generation. There were many rebels in the camp—women who, clear-sighted as Mary Wollstonecraft, resented the cramping outlook and limiting conditions to which they were condemned, with the pernicious effects on characters and temperaments that might otherwise have risen to loftier heights. The impetus to the feminine sense of injustice given by her *Vindication* was gathering in force as the years rolled by, and strengthening the undercurrent of resistance that would result in the inevitable reaction.

Women had so little to do ; so much was barred to them. They had no part in games or sport ; any practical form of philanthropy was almost impossible when in excursions into the outside world an attendant maid, footman, or elderly relative was incumbent. She had no part in public affairs, and therefore her interest in them was, in the main, vicarious. Without independent means, if she had a husband unsympathetic to her particular form of diversion, any entertainment she initiated was necessarily prefaced by enough intrigue and scheming to ruin the most straightforward character in a month. In fact one feels sure none but the frivolous-minded would have stooped to the methods of the previous century, the legacy to which the early Victorian was heir. Le Blanc discloses a result of the condition of dependence in which women were kept in his day.

He speaks of the pleasures of English ladies being a very serious affair, entailing months of thought and intrigue. If she wished to engineer a party at Bath, she had first to feign a breakdown in health, and over-persuade her doctor, win over the servants, beg the means from a relative, and finally deceive her husband.

When such a course was the necessary prelude to a mere pleasure, it could easily be avoided ; but where the health or well-being of a child, or any vital questions, were involved, with an unsympathetic or unscrupulous husband in command of the purse-strings a good woman must have

been torn a hundred ways before achieving her ends.

In 1832 the representation of women in the House of Lords was disallowed, and the Women's Disabilities Bill passed at the same moment that enfranchisement was extended to the uneducated male portion of the population. It might almost have seemed a recrudescence of the old panic, as the husband's authority was still further reinforced by an Act passed in 1834 giving him a further power to will away his wife's property should he choose to do so.

This appears to be the low-water mark of women's subjection in England through legislative inequalities. With the craving for higher knowledge and a wider education they had been making use of the greater facilities for obtaining books, and although no special advantages were offered them, the more ambitious had been educating themselves so far as possible, learning to become articulate and to advance the opinions rapidly gaining ground, and that a few were bold enough to express openly. In 1839 a married woman was first allowed to *appeal*—a very cautious concession—to Law Courts for access to her own children, or even, if under seven years of age, for their custody; abolishing an inhibition that must often have constituted a lever for coercion in married life and a guarantee for a wife's due submission through her mother-love.

In 1857, owing to a persistent although un-aggressive agitation, the Divorce laws in much the

same form as at present came into being ; a woman became entitled, not only to a judicial separation, but in certain conditions—unequal though they were—to divorce, and in the case of desertion by her husband, she was allowed to retain possession of her own property !

By the year 1867 she had found no less a mouth-piece to champion her cause than John Stuart Mill, who presented the first appeal for women's enfranchisement to a scoffing and unsympathetic Parliament. The feeling of the time with regard to her right to vote for or against the man who was to have a share in the government of her sex, is reflected in the pages of the *Punch* of the period. Year after year the old gibes—many of them very witty—at woman “in Parliament,” “in the editorial office,” in, in fact, anywhere and anything except the house, and of the unfortunate man tied to such a “hyena in petticoats,” were repeated ; partly inspired by genuine amusement that woman should imagine herself capable of anything beyond home-management or the bringing-up of children ; partly with the deliberate intention of further crystallizing, through ridicule, a public opinion already firmly established. Doubt was even thrown upon the latter presumption—her capacity for bringing up children—in the refusal to acknowledge her their natural guardian in the eyes of the law.

The steady persistence with which this Bill and that for the removal of the Women's Disabilities Act was presented to Parliament from 1870 to

1892, to be unfailingly rejected, is evidence in itself of an undercurrent of protest from the more highly educated and thoughtful members of the sex, at woman's status in law, and the curtailment of her opportunities as a citizen. It is difficult to realize the helplessness and entire subjection of the early- and mid-Victorian woman, without the power to handle her own money—humiliating enough even where harmony reigned; intolerable where other conditions prevailed—an appeal much more unequal than even to-day from infraction of the marriage vow, no control over her own children during her husband's life, and the appointment of guardian entirely in his hands at his death—an injustice that still requires to be adjusted, although no generous-minded man would nowadays take advantage of it—and public opinion virulently opposed to all her efforts towards a greater freedom.

If discipline be good for the soul, the soul of womanhood should have gained much through the purifying fires of the subjection of the Victorian age. Man himself knows the gall of the yoke, in the discipline of early training, of the camp, the messroom, the apprentice years of any calling, the need to fit his daily life and inclination into moulds made by other wills. He knows the temptation to insubordination, the irksomeness of restraint, the longing for freedom from control with full powers of self-expression. Women have been accused sometimes of suffering from the results of want of discipline! The processes for man's

discipline are for the most part derived from codes ; woman's more directly from the facts of life. He knows that to fit himself to govern he must first learn to obey. May it not be presumed through like reasoning that the age-long lesson of repression, and conformity to the will of others, has fitted woman to take part in the government of—at least—herself ?

CHAPTER XIII

SOME NOTABLE LATER VICTORIANS

The Victorian Age must always be regarded as an important milestone in the evolution of English-women ; the world moved on apace during the century and man in his war with matter advanced with giant strides, achieving in its later years victory over the air, that since the days of Icarus and his wings of wax had successfully defied him. Through machinery he learnt to save time and labour—born of his unceasing effort to evade the penalties of Adam's original sin. Out of the very inertia that is the keynote of matter, he had obtained the fulcrum through which he could force it to obey his will.

Never before had his ingenuity been so fruitful of results ; the rapidity with which invention followed invention, and nature's secrets were wrested from her unwilling grasp, was out of all proportion to that of previous centuries, succeeding each other with bewildering rapidity, and side by side with man's battle with the material, woman was warring no less diligently with the immaterial—the things of the spirit—straining also towards the goal for which they were mutually bound—the full expression of all the potentialities of the human race.

The women of the nineteenth century were, in my opinion, more definitely restless and unsatisfied than at any previous period in their history. That owing to a little more education, a little more experience, a slightly wider knowledge of the world, their wings were beginning to grow, that they were becoming vividly conscious of the injustice and limitations meted out to them, must have vastly added to the poignancy of their discontent. Those of us who knew intimately some of the women of the last two generations, know that this was so, and can guess at some of the trials of their daily lives ; women who, longing to take part in sport, politics, to gain experience of life, were condemned to sit by the fireside, placed " on the shelf " at five and thirty, and regarded as negligible in all the vital aspects of the social world. They kicked in vain against a prick that was too strong for them. Man had found his greatest incentive to achievement in fighting against the penalty incurred by whatever his original mistake may have been ; and woman, in her persistent efforts to throw off the yoke of subjection, was equally fulfilling her destiny, and is equally entitled to the spoils of victory. It would almost seem that from the bedrock of the narrow limitations which she touched during the earlier part of the nineteenth century she obtained the reaction which later on has poured those spoils into her lap with a more lavish hand than at any previous period in her history.

Although the names of women great in literature

and prominent in public affairs pointed to an increase of opportunity, it is not for a moment to be inferred the fight with circumstances had become any the less bitter. Public prejudice was to die slowly—is not even yet dead. Women were beginning to experience the sweets of earning an independent income, and the exhilaration of competition in the open market ; but the previous generation, including some even of their own sex, still looked askance at their efforts, those who suffered from false pride taking umbrage at the disgrace to the family of a money-earning female, and others murmuring regrets that women should be so lost to all sense of sex as to imagine they had any call anywhere except in the house. Fathers of families would still proudly protest, no daughter should leave the parental roof except to be married, incapable of realizing that the impulse urging her towards action, adventure, and a wider experience might be just as insistent as that of her brother, and that the implied attitude of waiting expectantly for a husband was very humiliating. Although education and the march of civilization had broadened the road to self-development, obstacles, many and great, still remained, quite sufficiently harassing to call for the patience and adaptability that go for so much in the moulding of character.

Mrs. Gaskell—organizer of relief schemes during the cotton strike which were afterwards publicly adopted, as well as author—George Eliot, Georges Sand, and others, following up the traditions of

the old French *salons*, established a name in literature that surpassed, in a wider knowledge of the world, Jane Austen and her contemporaries, again controverting the assumption that the female brain as a working organ is incapable of high intellectual achievement, at all events with regard to literature. Miss Braddon, with her hold over the public imagination from 1862 until quite modern times, put another nail in the coffin of the supposition that women were not capable of creative work. As the century grew older the names of women-writers multiplied, evidence of the effects of a higher education and a freer environment ; before it died, they were flocking into the arena in which work was judged on its own merits and combatants learnt their level in the open market. Mrs. Humphry Ward, "John Oliver Hobbes," "Lucas Malet," the latter brought up in an environment that inspired literary effort in an age full of discouragement, Flora Annie Steele and many more, proved that woman was at last triumphing once more over her limitations and—in the field of literature at least—coming into her own. By the dawn of the twentieth century, the standard of the average woman-novelist had certainly reached that of the average man.

In the world of science during Queen Victoria's reign women were encountering quite as much opposition as in other directions, with the inevitable result that very few names rose into prominence. Public opinion on this matter took a firm stand ; scientific investigation was not woman's business—

some of it was "indelicate," some of it likely to unsettle her faith. Fortunately woman's "faith" is not generally of so unstable a growth as to be unsettled by inquiry into the ways of the Creator. There was still a rooted objection to the "blue stocking," and we hear of Miss Poekels, who, although making some really important additions to scientific knowledge through her own study and experiment, refused to allow her name to be associated with it, on the grounds that, belonging as she did to an illustrious family, it behoved her not to bring disgrace upon the name!¹

Mary Somerville held a different opinion, although her early studies had to be conducted in secret. After leaving school, without any help she mastered the principles of Algebra and Euclid, showing the power of the stimulus towards higher knowledge to which women are subject, and pointing incidentally to the fret and uneasiness that must be consequent on its repression. In marrying Dr. William Somerville she found a companion and helpmate in her study of physical science, and in these congenial surroundings attained the celebrity she deserved. Laplace said she was the only woman who could understand his work. Her book *The Mechanism of the Heavens* made her famous, and her bust in the Hall of the Royal Society is a tribute to her position as a scientist of which her sex should be proud. Had she married a man steeped in the almost

¹ Lecture at the Royal Institution, Sir James Dewar, 1922.

universal prejudice of his time, she might well have developed into an hysterical, discontented woman, with a grudge against life and the world, and of which neither she nor anyone else would ever have realized the true source. She died in 1872, and her mantle seems to have fallen upon Agnes Clerke, who vindicated the potentialities of the female brain in the direction of scientific research by her *System of the Stars*; in 1893 she was awarded in open competition the Actonian prize for her work on Astronomy.

But as the first of her sex to make a definite and valuable contribution to scientific knowledge the name of Mme. Curie will always stand *facile princeps*; again, the result of opportunity.

She was fortunate in living during the later part of the century, when the opposers of female advancement were beginning to find themselves in a minority; and still more fortunate in a married life in which all the conditions that might have restricted the full development of her genius were removed. She worked hand-in-hand with her husband enjoying an intercourse and exchange of ideas beneficial to both, and the advantages of a laboratory; under these favouring conditions the powers within her were given their full chance of fruition. She was able to find expression without the hampering limitations of a previous generation, and the result was a further demonstration of woman's success when not stultified and impeded by environment.

The curious reactions to suggestion and conven-

tional ideals are nowhere more noticeable than in the case of Florence Nightingale.

No example is more illuminating of the possible effects of repression on ardent feminine nature, striving towards fulfilment in an unsympathetic age. We can follow in *Eminent Victorians*¹ the fierce craving for opportunity that fired the soul of this wonderful woman; the discontent, restlessness, eager visions of ideals fulfilled, the passionate desire for the betterment of humanity that tore at her heart, and backed by a will as unbendable as any man's, broke through obstacles that might have proved sufficiently insurmountable in themselves without the added disability of a sex hedged in with restrictions and an adverse public opinion.

So illuminating is the history of Florence Nightingale as exemplifying the main contention of this discussion, that it is worth while to dwell on it at some length. Every age, you will say, does not produce a Florence Nightingale. That may be true enough, for the reason, that behind the longing for expression, there lay, in her case, the indomitable will that overcame the limitations of her position as a member of an "inferior" sex; but you may be sure that every age has and does produce "mute inglorious" Florence Nightingales, wanting only that superlative quality of will, over whom those limitations have triumphed, and who by their very incapacity to articulate, can be of no value as witnesses. The world remains unaware of them,

¹ *Eminent Victorians*. Lytton Strachey.

and of their vain struggles towards expression, their self-restriction, and control over the impatience consequent on enforced limitation; no one ever guesses at the rebellion in their hearts, smothered conscientiously perhaps at its birth, while they dutifully arrange the flowers—according to some one else's taste—or attend to small household details that are irritants rather than interests.

Florence Nightingale herself might well have remained mute and inglorious had it not been for the accident of a Crimean War.

Can we imagine that great woman, conscious of the power within her that was to bring order out of the hideous chaos at Scutari, and to bend and break the opposition of Cabinets and war-ministers; to face horrors and discomforts unspeakable, risks and fatigue, to win the gratitude and adoration of thousands of sufferers, and finally to revolutionize hospital construction,—finding content and self-expansion in the trivial occupations of a Victorian woman's life? It is indeed testimony to the cramping conditions of marriage in that day, to any woman of understanding or "vision," that in face of the temptations of a real attachment Florence Nightingale should have decided for a freedom which the married state would for ever have denied her. Mr. Strachey himself refers to it as "the inevitable habiliments of a Victorian marriage."

Had she yielded, there can be but little doubt that instead of a Florence Nightingale there would have been a capricious, possibly ill-tempered, rest-

less woman, consumed with energies finding no vent ; one more unit would have been added to the army of secret rebels, and the world would have been the loser.

Her girlhood appears to have been a conscientious struggle to do her duty, the disciplinary effects of parental prejudice bringing into evidence all her power of self-control and dogged persistence ; duty was the guiding star of her existence. From the beginning she felt there was a wider, more important field of duty awaiting her than the simple surroundings of home-life demanded. The energy within never ceased to whip her, to goad her, to torture, to resent fiercely the limitations imposed upon her sex. Every attempt at a bid for wider experience was frustrated ; it astonished her conventional world that she seemed to "take no interest in husbands," nor regard marriage as the be-all and end-all of a woman's aspirations. Her desire to train as a hospital nurse was discouraged as a "preposterous scheme" by a family brought up to believe a woman incapable of any career except that of a parasite.

One is sorry for her mother, also trying to perform a duty that circumstances conspired to make very difficult ; for the mothers who in that narrow-minded age hatched "wild swans" and were forced to keep their wings clipped for fear they might fly, were much to be pitied.

The first step towards a fuller life was made when she became superintendent of a Nursing Home in

Harley Street, and it is difficult to fathom the emotions that must have found a battleground in her heart, before that stride towards independence, against all the opposition her parents could devise, was accomplished. Viewed in the light of after-events, its scope was limited enough, but it gave her the outlet her restricted energies demanded and she was more or less her own mistress. Strength of will, an indomitable courage, and a marvellous power of persistence had been developed during the probationary years of early opposition and discouragement, and when the tale of the horrors of the Scutari hospital mismanagement reached her, she was equipped in all respects for her mission of mercy and bitter struggle with the powers that were. And not only did she meet with official opposition, but her family and friends called her unsexed and lost to all sense of womanly modesty !

The lessons taught us by the war from which we have so lately suffered should open our eyes to the magnitude of the task undertaken and the colossal difficulties surmounted by Miss Nightingale in her work at Scutari. In a day when travelling was difficult, all means of transport comparatively primitive, besides being grossly mismanaged ; when women were without status beyond what their inherent qualities could command, and the innovation of a woman of the upper classes taking part in hospital work unheard of, anyone of either sex might well have quailed at the colossal undertaking.

To gain permission from the authorities, all of

whom—except Sidney Herbert—were sceptical and reluctant ; collect the necessary funds, organize the expedition, and, above all, inspire the public with confidence in a scheme that outraged all its conventional sense of fitness and desirability, were but the preliminaries to an undertaking that viewed from all its aspects was surely the most formidable ever faced by a woman. The mere fact of the sheltered, artificial life that lay behind, with one year only of probation in the Nursing Home in Harley Street, must have thrown into stronger relief the trials and responsibilities to be dealt with ; she suddenly found herself in a position not only of independence but of authority with responsibility, first to the sufferers under her charge ; secondly, to the British public who had entrusted her with funds.

Nothing achieved by women during the late war—and they achieved much—at all equals the Herculean task of Florence Nightingale owing to the disabilities of the age in which she lived, and which she had to fight in addition to the external difficulties inevitable to such a situation. No effort of imagination can picture with anything like truth the evils of the Scutari hospitals where circumstances had proved too strong for the men responsible for them. Where they had failed she succeeded ; the intricate knot of their blunders she disentangled ; she broke down their opposition and by her marvellous power of organization put those to shame who had made the situation what it was. As the “Lady of the

Lamp " she was adored by thousands of wounded soldiers, who, had it not been for her, would have succumbed to the want of system and organization which had prevailed until her keen brain and strength of purpose supplied the remedy.

The public, appreciating the glory of her work and the wonderful effects of her personality, placed her on a pedestal as the "Lady of the Lamp," and proclaimed her to be of the highest type of womanhood ; but it still clung to the mistaken ideals with regard to the sex set up by prejudice during the previous years of the century, and, led away by the will-o'-the-wisp of its own arguments, came to some remarkable conclusions.

Her biographers argued thus ;—as she was admitted to be of the highest type of womanhood, and the highest type of womanhood must embody gentleness, meekness, adaptability, and submission to authority, Florence Nightingale must necessarily be gentle, meek, adaptable, and submissive to authority, and as such she was handed down through succeeding generations ; showing what mistakes men can make about women when they judge them by their own preconceived standards. For Florence Nightingale was none of these things, more especially the last, and it has been left to her biographers of this generation to find it out. Nor would she have succeeded if she had been so. To-day she is painted in the far finer, stronger colouring she deserves, with edges clear-cut and defined instead of smoothed away.

It was the irresistible force of her character

that carried her through, neither gentleness nor adaptability, and from the men in authority at Scutari you would have got a very frank opinion as to her sweet submissiveness to established authority! But Esther, the meek successor of rebellious Vashti, had been held up for so long as an example to womanhood, that Florence Nightingale, the idol of the moment, had to be made to fit it. She had among strong attributes an iron will, but one never hears of its exercise in any direction except for the public good.

If Mr. Strachey in his admirable record of her life had been able to see with a woman's eyes he would have referred to what he admits to be her "*cri du cœur*" with a greater sympathy. That cry vibrated with the concentrated protest of a century. He calls her bitter. Had she no reason to be bitter? He admits that—

" . . . she rails through a hundred pages of close print at the falsities of family life, the ineptitudes of marriage, the emptiness of convention, in the spirit of an Ibsen or a Samuel Butler. Her fierce pen, shaking with intimate anger, depicts in biting sentences the fearful fate of an unmarried girl in a wealthy household."

There is not a thinking woman in England longing for expression, who would not endorse every word of that bitter cry. It was indeed a "*cri du cœur*," but treated as negligible and even rather absurd by a sex who still talked of woman's "*adaptability*" and contented acquiescence.

Was it wonderful that Florence Nightingale was bitter in invective against the position of the Victorian woman? When the campaign was over, she returned to England, to fight tooth and nail with the War Office for the reform of hospital administration in the Army; she wrote a book of more than eight hundred printed pages which is still the leading authority on the subject of hospital organization; and after strenuous fighting with the authorities succeeded in getting a Royal Commission formed to inquire into the evils of the prevailing system.

But being a woman, the doors of that Commission were closed to her; the possibility of such a privilege was so unheard of that it was not even suggested. The woman who had worked miracles for the honour of England and the good of humanity at Scutari was of the "inferior" sex, and presumably unfit to take an active part in the Commission which through her own exertions had been called into being. Had she married, she would have been bracketed by the law with minors and idiots.

CHAPTER XIV

DEFINITE ADVANCE TOWARDS EMANCIPATION

Much more could be said of the disastrous environment of the Victorian woman before turning our backs on her and facing the problems of to-day—an environment that must necessarily have set a seal upon her descendants, both mentally and morally, that will only be effaced by many years of freedom and independent thought. Should any doubt it, let them read the literature on the subject, contributed during two centuries and more, by both sexes—especially by men—and grotesque to modern ears in its frank admonitions of blind submission to man and the most successful methods of hunting him. So far from showing signs of modification, the convenient maxims with the passing of time had crystallized into established opinion, and in the Victorian environment we find an almost unquestioned acceptance of conditions prompted by tradition and the self-interest that seems to have blinded man to so great an extent. Although written a hundred years previously, Lord Halifax's *Advice to a Daughter* was still the advice given to daughters, sisters, and wives,

until half of the last century had elapsed. A judicious blindness was not only recommended, but enjoined upon wives, the pill presumably gilded by the argument that in return the husband will be the "more yielding in other things"! Complaisancy on the wife's side was recommended as a lever or bribe towards attaining her own ends. Whether by accident or design Lord Halifax's advice ignores the fact that under the divorce laws—or rather the want of them—prevailing until the middle of the nineteenth century, blindness was the only course open to the wife compatible with dignity. Is it possible to imagine any self-respecting woman would consider the lever provided by complaisancy any sort of compensation for the insult to her person—and, where love existed, the aching of her heart?

Lord Kames, who advised that women "ought to be disciplined early to bear wrongs," sets out a course of training that might be applicable to kittens. And the sentiments expressed by Lord Kames and Lord Halifax in a previous century were faithfully handed on by Mrs. Ellis for the guidance of her own generation.

If any circumstances have conduced to render woman unfit to take a part in the government of her country, it might be supposed to lie in the stultifying, paralysing effects of this past repression and enforced dependence. No conditions could have been more liable to result in the deterioration of any inherent qualities she may have possessed,

or tended more to atrophy her sense of moral responsibility. In spite of it, the Victorian woman, whenever the opportunity offered, proved the innate nature of her characteristics morally and mentally, in rising to the occasion in spite of all her limitations, and doing as much—and far more—than was expected of her. As the French Revolution brought into evidence the courage, endurance, and self-sacrifice of the women of its century, so the Indian Mutiny and Crimean Campaign produced tales of valour and service, and proved no less than this last war what woman can do when she gets the chance. To the Victorian woman was left as legacy the debasing standards and maddening limitations of a previous age. Steadily through the century she worked onwards and upwards, breaking through barriers, sweeping conventions aside, bearing insult and ridicule that those coming after her might have a place in the sun. No one reading the records of the last hundred years can say the Victorian woman was not a good fighter or deny that to her we owe the foundations laid of a future freedom.

She, too, left an inheritance which, in this new century of a more favourable status in law and civic rights than ever before, the generation of to-day have been apt to undervalue. They may congratulate themselves—and rightly—on having at long last obtained the suffrage, but that achievement was equalled in importance by the passing of the Married Women's Property Act of 1882.

No step ever taken in the modern advance towards female emancipation has been so big with results, not only in the concession of control and disposal of her own property, but in the acknowledgment of her rights as an individual apart from, and independent of, her husband. In this world of appreciation through contrast, "What can they know of Freedom, who only Freedom know?" and it is impossible for any man or woman of the more enlightened to-day, to realize the access of self-respect and sense of responsibility consequent to women of any capacity or brains on the passing of that Act. To be regarded no longer as a mere chattel, a negligible appendage in the eyes of the law, an echo, the shadow of another's personality, but as an independent unit of the community, was in itself a stimulus to a greater sense of responsibility and a conscientious performance of duty.

There were women of that previous generation who with money of their own had never signed a cheque in their lives, had no idea of the worth of a sovereign, and who yet were accused of a lack of economic organization and a want of administrative power; middle-aged and elderly women of brain and intellect, who were obliged to ask a reluctant husband for every penny required for household expenditure, and who were merely a buffer between domestics bent on running up bills and the man who did not wish to pay them. The Married Women's Property Act was the key to

a new development in woman's individualization ; a legislative measure wholly for her benefit, and unconnected with any consideration of her position merely as wife or mother.

That is part of the debt owed to yesterday by to-day, and was accomplished after struggles and dogged persistence on the part of the Victorian kicking against the prick of subjection ; in spite of her vapours and megrims assumed for the benefit of an artificial generation, and for the killing of superfluous time, she laid some sure foundation-stones for a posterity that is apt to scoff at her.

The right of ill-treated wives to apply to a magistrate for relief must have been an unpleasant surprise to a husband of the baser sort, accustomed to regard a wife as a little lower than his horse or his dog. This was granted in 1886, and in 1888 a vote was given to female tax-payers for Borough and Parish Councils and school boards. This unheard-of innovation raised an outcry of dismay. That men were to be asked to sit on Councils with women was unreasonable, and the whole country was going to the dogs. The country, however, survived, although the case of ancient Rome was much quoted, that as women rose the Empire fell—overlooking the fact that it was after the repeal of the laws giving women a better status that the fall of the Empire took place.

The most serious student of psychology, without experience, will never understand the revolution in her own estimate of herself this small privilege

—of sitting on Borough and Parish Councils—occasioned. The woman of any mentality at last began to feel she “counted”; even this small position of responsibility was a spur to increasing her knowledge of affairs, to taking an interest in questions of parochial administration. She wanted to understand things, how government *worked*, and saw perhaps an opening for the remedying of some evils.

But it was not until 1894 that women were allowed to sit on the local boards.

By the end of the century public opinion with regard to female education had become so far modified that if a woman had brains and learning it was no longer incumbent upon her to conceal the fact; clever women, although too discreet to advertise their cleverness, had justified their claims to be better housekeepers, and more entertaining companions, without necessarily posing as rivals to the opposite sex, and the higher education of women had become an established habit. With these additional advantages, their development advanced with amazing rapidity.

It is true that still no feminine painter or musician of superlative genius had arisen, if we are to accept the verdict of the Art Critic, and I am quite aware that to take the appreciation of the multitude as evidence of artistic merit is against all the canons of convention. But that “The Roll Call” had superlative merit of its own cannot be denied, stirring as it did the emotions of a greater number

of admirers than any picture can lay claim to to-day. It can claim outstanding merit in its appeal to men's hearts, and if to bring a message is the aim of art, that picture certainly fulfilled its mission, although in technique and to modern standards it may not have conveyed any fresh illumination to the world of art. Rosa Bonheur's "Horse Fair" was no mean accomplishment for a sex still in shackles that prevented free access to the channels of development. For this tardiness of woman to "arrive" in the Fields of Art and Music is doubtless due to causes already mentioned—the difficulties of acquiring a technique entailing many years of study under more favourable auspices than had so far been at their command. It seems an irony of fate that with the present far better opportunities for development her chances of conspicuous success should be greatly diminished; but in these days of increased competition in all lines of work, for one competitor in the field during the last century there are perhaps a hundred or more to-day, and it is an infinitely more difficult task to rise above the level of a talented average. Men are finding it so; with fewer aspirants to outstrip it was easier to head the list. The world is full of clever artists to-day, and women will necessarily find it a tougher task to claim recognition of their creative genius now, than when fine artists were the exception. The march of evolution turns the exception of yesterday into the average of to-day, raising still higher standards for to-

morrow, and it may be long before women will make good the time lost in the past, while men were busy at self-development. Even now, although there are in their ranks already many whose work is adjudged fit to appear on its walls, membership of the premier Society in England is denied them. It may be mentioned as an encouraging confirmation of this opinion, that in a recent letter in a daily paper claiming that British Art is at the present moment the finest in the world, of the seventeen names given as the most worthy representatives of it, one of them was a woman's!¹ A small proportion, perhaps, but indicative of more to come as the result of freedom of access to facilities for study.

Time alone with opportunity equal to man's must be the arbiter in this much-vexed question. But it should not be forgotten that the nine Muses from whom all creative inspiration was supposed to come, were feminine!

One of the most remarkable and instructive results of the beginning of emancipation was the immediate increase of women working voluntarily in the interests of charity and charitable institutions; an evidence of altruistic impulse that would assuredly be an asset to the government of any community. Governments are apt to lack this quality, the grinding of particular axes being made too often of paramount importance. The sympathy and self-forgetfulness of women in the past have

¹ Laura Knight

given them an almost preternatural facility for putting themselves in their neighbour's shoes : and the want of this power has been, and still is, the root of most evils in the world.

Where the bachelor, free of family ties and responsibilities, turns his mind and leisure to his club, hunting, golf, or any other form of amusement, woman in the same position turns hers in nine cases out of ten to "good works." It is almost expected of her—taken as a matter of course ; and has been even the source of witticisms which she is herself the first to appreciate with an added touch of ironic humour to which the male eye is blind ! She is at the beck and call of any member of her family in distress, often denying herself that she may have the more to spend on others. Many men have also quietly devoted their energies in the same way, without advertisement or hope of reward, but while with men it is perhaps the exception, with women one might almost say it is the rule ; Mr. Lecky remarks on the noticeable number of women who at the end of the last century turned their greater independence of action and control of their own property towards charitable ends.¹

Would not any governing body be the richer for this item in woman's equipment ?

Men still seem to have little idea of how much they have incidentally hindered and delayed their own evolution, by failing to exploit to the full the inherent abilities and energies of woman.

¹ *History of England in the Eighteenth Century.* Lecky.

Collectively, man has been her enemy—there is no question of that—taking as much as possible and giving as little, treating her as a child long after she has been grown up. Man-made laws speak for themselves. He has been for the most part unaware of the harm wrought, intent upon his own development, quite incapable of visualizing the world except from his own point of view, and remaining in blissful ignorance of a psychology he has never taken the trouble to understand. “As for the intrinsic value of a woman, few know it, and nobody cares,” wrote Elizabeth Montagu. Every advantage she has gained in status has been the result of earnest struggle and pressure brought to bear upon reluctant opponents. There is admittedly another side to the question which will be dealt with later—but man has been the aggressor, and in self-defence and claiming what is no more than her right, woman cannot be accused of adopting an unreasonable attitude.

How much more to the point it would have been if, instead of allowing those energies to expend themselves in fighting for just demands, man had willingly helped to direct them into channels invaluable to himself and the whole scheme of evolution! The inherent dynamic potentiality of female energies is being proved by the present success of their efforts, no less than by the exceptional instances throughout history already quoted, where opportunity has allowed them scope. It has been aptly said that if you make a prisoner

half your time and energies are expended in preventing his escape. Much waste of dynamic force on both sides might have been avoided had woman been "roped in" by an appeal to her better nature and good sense, instead of coerced through the tyranny of might.

With the Divorce Act, the Married Women's Property Act—the result of thirty years' incessant struggle—and a general acknowledgment of the right of women to educational advantages on the credit side of the balance sheet, women started on the present century with all the hope and encouragement such stimuli provided. Inch by inch during the first decade they fought their way, gaining admission here, toleration there, their aims and claims always misunderstood by the sex that held them in bondage. All they asked was equal opportunity and the right to govern themselves; to have a voice in the spending of money often earned by their own exertions. The best of men, from inability to imagine himself in any state of life beyond that in which the Creator has placed him, honestly could not sympathize with the woman's point of view, nor see why, if she were clothed, fed, and treated kindly, she should ask more of life. He could not admit as an injustice the law prevailing that the money earned by the exercise of a woman's intellect and perseverance should be taken from her in taxes, while she was decreed too brainless and incompetent to have a voice in its application. The fight put up by Miss

Jex-Blake and her adherents for equality of opportunity in the medical profession stands for ever as evidence of a moral force and invincible courage quite equal to any similar display on the part of men. While development was progressing at the colleges of Girton and Newnham, men had persisted that woman's brain was incapable of the same degree of intellectual attainment as their own, although the opposite had been demonstrated in open competition; their success in the Honours examinations had proved conclusively that the capabilities of the female brain were equal to those of the most advanced male. That bit of ground having been taken from under their feet, they shifted to other footholds which proved equally illusive, until at last they were forced to fall back desperately on the old clarion cry, "You are in face of a revolt against the limitations of sex!" The Persian princes must have stirred uneasily in their graves, and a whispered "I told you so!" have faintly vibrated through the Halls sacred to the University Don.

Why have they been so afraid of women? Was it mere crude jealousy—or was it from a reluctance to put to the proof the capability of woman to do man's work, and thereby entail a descent on his part from the pedestal of superiority? But woman has always known she could!—and has proved it when put to the test. If further proof were wanted, the late war supplied it. And yet—driven into the last ditch—one man at least,

forced to acknowledge the patent fact, has ingeniously attempted to justify the old position by turning the argument upside down and suggesting that, as apparently women *can* do men's work, men must hitherto have been doing work only fit for women !¹

Only in a novel certainly, but in the light of other works by the same author probably with serious intent !

Is it perhaps men fear that if women turn their eyes to the stars they will not notice the holes in their socks—that if their minds are concerned with the glacial period they will forget to see that their shaving-water is hot ; or that if they learn to think in millions they will cease to take any interest in the weekly accounts ? But it is very rarely the intellectual woman can have this thrown at her. On the contrary, the learned professor who neglects everything and everybody in heaven or earth except his own particular line of research is the more familiar figure of the two. Except in the case of Mme. de Rambouillet, history has handed down no examples of households neglected by literary mistresses, and certainly to-day experience points in the same direction. For the most part, the educated woman is a conscientious woman, and brains are as valuable an asset in organizing and running a household as in any other walk of life. Which is the more likely to land her husband in the bankruptcy court—the clever woman who

¹ *What Woman Wishes.* Ludovici.

understands the value of money and its administration, or the empty-headed fool who imagines that so long as there is a cheque-book there can be no dearth of money at the Bank ? The assumption that all women are born-housekeepers has done much harm ; that women are born-mothers is in more unequal degree than is suspected, although that has its basis in a law of nature and house-keeping has not. That every woman can be a successful housekeeper, argues either that every woman is born with brains, or that brains are not required for housekeeping—both of which premises are wrong. The success of the organization of even the smallest household is dependent upon the amount of brains put into it, and if that had been the aspect in which the running of households had been considered, there would have been much less discomfort and needless extravagance in the world, and more incentive towards excellence, and good housekeeping would not have earned a negligible character as a desirable quality.

Women with good heads for business are coming forward every year ; such instances are familiar to all of us, and, when necessary, it will be found they by no means neglect their household duties. When they can earn sufficient to pay some one to do it for them, why should they not do so ? Man has been paying others to do things for him since the days of Adam, when according to tradition it was decreed he should do them for himself !

If man's opposition has been through fear of

interference with his prerogative as the superior sex, it throws a little doubt on the security of his pretensions. A position that has had to be fenced in by unjust laws, and can only be upheld by catching women in the nursery—which is a free translation of Lord Kames' advice—cannot be considered sound in itself. The basis of inequality of the sexes seems to have been in the inequality of conditions ; woman has been playing the game with one hand tied behind her back. But the doctrine, reiterated through centuries, has driven its roots into every hole and cranny of convention and public opinion, until man has honestly believed woman's subjection to have been designed by a just and all-wise Providence.

But he has been very careful to take no risks—and his precautions have sometimes brought the suspicion of a smile to the face of the Sphinx !

CHAPTER XV

SOME PROCESSES OF MENTAL EVOLUTION

The preceding chapters have been written not entirely as an exposition of the wrongs of women in the past, nor whether—keeping in view the particular aim of her evolution—they might have been avoided or remedied, but mainly to show how through the limiting and disciplinary effects of her environment she has inevitably developed characteristics and qualities that make her equipment for a part in the government of her country equal to man's—although not necessarily similar. Arguing from cause to effect it is reasonable to expect that in many respects she will contribute what he lacks, while he continues to supply certain essentials to which it is possible she may never attain.

To do so it is necessary to refer briefly to the still undetermined question—whether characteristics acquired by one generation can be inherited by the next, and what that exactly means.

Whether such transmission can be effected scientists to-day have not yet definitely decided.¹

There are still followers of Lamarck, Darwin

¹ *Heredity*. The late L. Doncaster.

and other biologists who believe it to be possible, but it seems very much simpler to arrive at conclusions in this respect when dealing with the material side only on the question of heredity. Experiments such as those made by Mendel with peas and beans deal exclusively with the form- or material-side of nature, not the life or spiritual side, and eliminate the possible variation in results caused by the stimulus of the personal will from within, or the influence of other wills from without. The human will with its varying degrees of activity is undoubtedly a force to be reckoned with wherever conditions permit of its functioning, even in its relation to matter.

If heredity in the transmission of acquired characteristics be denied, where are we to look for the processes of evolution ?

The modification of certain qualities and the acquisition of others is at the root of all progress in the human race. If there be no stability in individual progress—and progress is a form of variation—no permanent step in advance can ever be made. To advance, the particular of to-day must become the average of to-morrow, the universal of the day after—or we are only marking time. This was the idea adopted by Darwin, Wallace and their adherents, and it is admitted by modern biologists that organic evolution—that is, development of the organs of the body—must lie at the root of all progress.¹ With

¹ *Evolution of Living Organisms.* E. S. Goodrich, F.R.S.

regard to humanity, the processes are so slow, and trespass so nearly on what is called physiological psychology, that they are very difficult to observe. Certainly all the experiments connected with reversion to type—the gradual loss through disuse, or some new circumstance in environment, of attributes apparently acquired through previous generations—are in support of the Darwinian hypothesis.

But Weismann has put forward other views.

In suggesting that variation—meaning the modification of qualities such as size, colour, or form—takes place in the body only, be it animal or vegetable, and that the germ-plasm itself remains always unaltered, he would seem to put out of court the transmission of such acquired qualities; but scientists still leave us organic evolution. Were this latter possibility denied it would argue that the brain through which man performs all the most intricate functions of mentality to-day is an instrument exactly similar to that of the cave-man when the race was in its cradle. Man himself, never content with the machinery he has created for material processes, is always devising something better—improvements in his own instruments in his struggle with matter. Is it probable the Intelligence behind all creation would be less exacting? And if the stimulus of man's environment has led to the development of certain powers, woman's environment must have done no less.

The brain, acting under the influence of certain stimuli, would gradually develop habits that would result in stability, and that would predispose it to respond to similar stimuli by similar reactions. That is how habit is established. According to Weismann, although this reaction to certain stimuli may take place with each succeeding generation, the germ-plasm remains unaffected. What in that case may have been the initial cause of any variation in either physical or mental human qualities is outside the bounds of our present discussion ; but whether qualities acquired through environment can be transmitted is within it, and it would almost seem that the evolution of the psychological and mental side of humanity, and of the material, should be treated from different standpoints.

That the scientist would agree to this is shown in the following passage :

“ If the whole chain of physico-chemical metabolic processes going on in even the human body and brain be some day discovered, the mental processes will still remain untouched and incapable of being described in the same terms.

“ The current method of dealing with mental processes, even morals and emotions, in a scientific explanation of evolution is then a makeshift, a provisional, but convenient method.” ¹

It is admitted that such diseases as tuberculosis, or insanity, can be acquired and handed down from

¹ *Evolution of Living Organisms.* E. S. Goodrich, F.R.S.

father to son irrespective of environment, and can become what is called hereditary ; but that what is transmitted is the liability to contract the disease, not the disease itself. If no variation in the human mechanism can be handed down, how is this acquired liability transmitted ? No one would suggest the offending microbe could be handed down from parent to offspring !

The fact that in Africa there is a tribe who have gradually made their bodies immune to certain tropical diseases ¹ is evidence of some sort of such transmission ; the result is apparently due to the influence of mind over matter, showing man's will or desire to be a factor which must not be overlooked in a study of the subject from the psychological aspect.

Weismann, unlike a still more modern biologist, M. Geley, seems to make no allowance in speculations with regard to variation in the human race for the action of will and suggestion, now acknowledged in many responsible quarters to have so much direct influence over the physical body.

In spite, however, of Weismann's theory—which he seems later to have modified in certain respects ²—instinct is brought forward in evidence for the transmission of acquired characteristics. Instincts, crystallizing into habit, may eventually through succeeding generations become a stable quality ; and it is also admitted by acknowledged

¹ Lecture at the Royal Institution, 1922.

² Harmsworth's *Encyclopædia*.

authorities such as Professor Galton and others that the mental and moral attributes of man which are closely in touch with and influenced by his physical organs, can be inherited and handed on to future generations. This, of course, would not necessarily imply a transmission of the quality itself, but the evolution of the seat of its activities.

A man's learning would not be handed down to his son, but a brain with increased capacity for learning might be. The brain where control of, say, violent temper had become a habit, would have practised that habit until what had first been a difficult effort would have become second nature, requiring hardly any special exercise of will, but performed more or less automatically, and passing into the acquired quality of self-control.

Galton's statistics are all in favour of the transmission of intellectual attributes, and Professor Pearson, with regard to mental and moral qualities, demonstrated through reports from school teachers that temper, conscientiousness, natural good spirits, besides intellectual ability, are undoubtedly transmitted; proving perhaps that where the human will is a factor results may be looked for not to be expected from the vegetable kingdom. It is brought forward as evidence for Weismann's theory that although a dog's tail be docked for repeated generations, he will continue to be born with it as originally designed by nature;¹ but in this case it would surely be an *imposed* quality, not

¹ *Evolution of Living Organisms*, E. S. Goodrich, F.R.S.

acquired. In the acquirement of any characteristic through environment, some sort of mental activity seems to be involved.

The question seems to be how, rather than whether, acquired qualities can be transmitted; for that they are handed down is undeniable whether through environment, tradition, suggestion or inheritance. Man's passions in the raw may be of the same texture to-day as those of his primitive ancestors, but his power of controlling them, evolved through the stimulus of legislation, of public opinion, and experience of the disastrous results of indulgence is assuredly more developed than that of the cave-man. A noticeable example is the natural shrinking from unnecessary cruelty exhibited to-day by all men except the most depraved; a shrinking that cannot be said to have been conspicuous among the early progenitors of the race or even in the days of the spectacular displays in the Coliseum of Ancient Rome.

The arguments for and against seem to resolve themselves into this—that whether acquired qualities can or cannot be hereditary, the liability to them can be, through the evolution or degeneration of the human organ, which admission is all that is required for the purpose in hand.

This brief digression has appeared necessary before following up the conclusions to be deduced from the history of female evolution. The fact remains beyond all question that be the method what it may, acquired qualities are handed down;

but if it be through environment and tradition rather than inheritance as the disciples of Mendel and Weismann aver, they will have less inherent stability, and it behoves woman to see that the traditions of past generations are upheld by present, and that her sex, through a possibly moribund tradition in the future and a less disciplinary environment, do not revert to the primeval conditions which are possibly all she has by right of inheritance.

Pre-natal influence has also to be taken into account, a power of mind over matter not to be denied. Abraham Lincoln's mother, having failed to develop in a somewhat illiterate husband the qualities in man she most admired, turned her mind to the moulding of the son she hoped for, with what results the world is familiar. If pre-natal impression from either within or without can result in "birthmarks," surely the influence on the less material side should be even more marked. In which case the influence of environment and its resulting effects on the mother should have its effect on the offspring.

For in spite of all the Mendels and Weismanns in creation, the discipline of her environment in the past has given woman a power of self-control and self-abnegation of which man has little idea. Whether it be due to the linking up of an unbroken chain of tradition, the handing on of deeply engrained principles from mothers to daughters, a uniformity in early training, or the evolution of the instrument

for all activities moral and mental—the brain, evolving in power over the body—woman's environment has developed in her certain qualities which should now stand her in good stead; and although she is nearer to emancipation, her disabilities in legislation and civic privileges are still sufficiently restricting to furnish the fulcrum for the further development of those qualities for some time to come.

There are still so many limitations peculiar to her sex that are hard to bear, some of which it is to be hoped may be remedied during the next few years. Lord Kames' advice¹ that women should be taught in the nursery to suffer wrongs gladly is becoming as obsolete as wooden ships. Women are no longer taking the existing order of things as an inevitable dispensation of a Providence whose ways have appeared to them even more inscrutable than to the opposite sex. The oppressor is much less likely to question the ways of an all-wise Deity than the oppressed. Had man collectively realized that a system, taken by him as a matter of course, might entail deep humiliation and regret to the sex he professed to protect, although quite possibly at a loss for a remedy in existing social conditions, he would have shown less indifference towards the sufferers.

The laws of succession, even modified as at present, are harder to bear than man might suppose. Where the remedy lies it is difficult to see. Future

¹ *Emancipation of English Women.* W. L. Blease.

generations may succeed in unravelling this intricate knot, but the fact remains that where there is a case of entailed property, and often where it is unentailed, the moment arrives when the woman is expected to abdicate, and to abdicate gracefully—and the process of abdication, whether just or unjust, remediable or irremediable, must be unpleasant to the chief actor. To be forced to leave, at the end of perhaps as much as thirty or forty years, the home she had learnt to regard as her own, the birthplace of her children, alive with poignant associations, and never return to it again except as a guest, has very fine possibilities for discipline in it. It would be apt to arouse a flash of rebellion in the meekest soul, although no doubt Mrs. Ellis would have deplored so revolutionary a sentiment in a sex whose main duty was to give as little trouble as possible.

A small matter, I repeat, but man, putting himself in the same position, will acknowledge the process must inevitably be trying to the least sensitive of temperaments, and the control of natural emotions a necessary concomitant; it is one of the little disciplines that has earned for woman the character of “adaptability.”

A more serious matter, for which it is to be hoped a remedy will be found shortly, is the law relative to her position with regard to her children. Could anything be more unjust and unjustifiable than the inequality between the parents with regard to guardianship? This particular yoke has

galled the shoulders of womanhood throughout the ages, reducing the mother as it does, in fact, to the position of an inadequately paid attendant. How, striking as it does at the root of a fundamental instinct, impeding as it has the performance of a sacred duty—the protection of her offspring—woman has borne it for centuries without vehement and concerted protest it is difficult to explain, for it certainly has not been a willing assent. That the father should have all rights of guardianship over the children during his lifetime—should be able to bequeath those rights to whom he will at death, and if dying intestate they should revert by law to the nearest male relative, is a relic of the old barbarism; while the mother who has borne them, suffered for them, reared them safely through the trying years of infancy and childhood—when, as a man once eloquently remarked, anyone else would have drowned them!—has to stand aside without any real authority over them, or legal status, when it comes to protecting them from undesirable influences.

Should the father be sufficiently petty-minded and tyrannical to insist on his rights and take advantage of these conditions to the children's detriment during his life, the only remedy available to the mother is the humiliating process of appealing to the Court of Chancery for protection—if she be in a position to settle a hundred pounds on the child. If she cannot produce this sum, the evil remains unrighted—a double form of injustice, as

it means one law for the rich, another for the poor.

Where custody of the children is specially bestowed in legal proceedings or by the father's will the guardianship may be assigned to the woman ; but in no case is she the natural guardian of her own child, whether boy or girl, except in cases of illegitimacy, when she is permitted to relieve the father of all inconvenient responsibilities !

This indefensible situation has already been touched on, but it is so fundamentally cruel that it cannot be too much insisted upon. To-day, no thinking man or woman would attempt to justify this condition of affairs, and no doubt the remedy will come, when inequalities of divorce have been dealt with.

Women had much cause for complaint in the distribution of property in the event of intestacy. The logic in dividing the property of the man—who has formally endowed his wife with all his worldly goods—between the widow and children, or, in the event of no family, the widow and heirs at law, while the woman's goes wholly to her husband, is rather obscure ; but no doubt Lord Kames' receipt for her early training has kept her from asking too many inconvenient questions.

While engaged on these pages a scheme for the alteration of this law has been inaugurated, and will no doubt be followed by the repeal of others equally inequitable.¹

¹ Lord Birkenhead's Law of Property Bill awaiting the Royal Assent.

This contemptuous treatment of women, the refusal to regard them as responsible agents, as anything in effect but a means for the continuance of the race, has kept all power of initiative in the background and at one end of the scale produced the parasitical variety, upon which—being the less difficult to understand—man is often apt to base his reflections upon the sex ; feather-headed women who wish for nothing more than to be well-fed, clothed luxuriously, and amused, without effort to themselves. Having inaugurated and legislated on the principle of inferiority, and encouraged women to be dependent and helpless, the parasite is a natural and logical result, and in her man has only got what he asked for. But fortunately to-day they are in a minority, and becoming more so every year of added independence and educational advantages ; that this is so is evident in the great increase among young women who refuse to allow their male companions to pay the railway fares and restaurant bills that a few years ago would have been taken as a matter of course. One can only hope the vampires who take all they can extract from the men, young or otherwise, of their acquaintance will soon be an extinct species—but perhaps that is a little Utopian !

The more advanced woman of to-day has used the restrictions and limitations as the fulcrum for the self-control and other qualities which should prove invaluable to future governments, and whether science decides they are hers by right

of tradition and early environment rather than inheritance or the contrary, they have been acquired, and will still continue for the present to be acquired, through the influence of a still chastening environment. The fact that she is coming into her own at long last argues fighting qualities that did not blossom in a day; that she can claim her rights nowadays without being called a "hyena in petticoats" shows that both to men and women the acquired quality of a greater tolerance has been handed in some manner from generation to generation. She has fought against big odds, squandering wastefully much strength of purpose, courage, and endurance in the effort to prove she has them, and the final climax of her struggle and vehement protest against her disabilities found its climax in the suffragette movement, with which we are all so familiar that it will serve no purpose to go into it in detail here.

Whether those years of open rebellion were the ultimate cause of the Sex Disqualification Removal Act of 1919, or not, it is now impossible to say and always will be; also, whether that desirable end would have been attained without the intervening experience of the war.

One point, however, must be conceded, although little sympathy may be accorded to some of the militant methods. By her persistence, in spite of abuse, contumely, and in many cases physical and moral discomfort, her sufferings in prison willingly endured, and her unswerving loyalty

to the aim in view, the militant suffragette proved she was in deadly earnest; that her demands were the result of long thought and honest conviction, and that she intended at least to be heard. Mary Wollstonecraft had started the era of gentler methods, and after more than a century's trial they had proved a failure. To have called her "a hyena in petticoats" was waste of artillery, with the modern suffragette still to come! Horace Walpole would have run short of invective!

Woman, in that final struggle for a right to vote, showed that quibbles and evasions were going to put her off no longer; she meant at least to have her questions answered. Man could of course continue to legislate on the principle that might is right, but no longer was it to be explained away by casuistry; he must come out into the open as a frank advocate for tyranny. No longer could woman's acquiescence in existing conditions be taken for content and "adaptability," her one great supreme protest had contradicted that. She had advertised definitely what she wanted, and men could no longer pretend to turn a deaf ear. Nor had it been altogether pretence; tradition and conventional ideas were so strong that man probably had honestly believed what he wanted to believe.

Therefore, whether to the suffragette movement the ultimate success is to be accredited or not, it assuredly laid the foundations for the Act of 1919. What the suffragette began, the war finished;

she proved women really wanted the vote ; the war proved that she was fit for it—not only by her strenuous and efficient work during that great struggle for freedom, but by her instant abandonment of her own cause in loyalty to that of her country.

CHAPTER XVI

EFFECTS OF ENFRANCHISEMENT

The moral effects of enfranchisement on women have gone, and will go, far deeper than a surface consideration might suppose, tending in itself to qualify them for the exercise of their new privilege by the consequent increase of self-respect, and sense of responsibility. It has never been easy to maintain towards self a respect tacitly denied by the attitude of others. The mere suggestion that you do not count in the world of action fathers an inclination to believe it. Should any modern woman doubt the fact, let her visit a certain island in the Channel where a married woman is still non-existent in the eyes of the law with regard to property, and she will understand something of the humiliations her Victorian predecessors suffered—and were supposed to suffer gladly.

Mr. Blease rightly remarks :

“No one who cannot understand the state of a man of sound judgment and good character, who is deprived of a highly important right or privilege by some accident of creed or nationality, can understand that of a woman suffragist.”

The contempt implied, the assumption of inferi-

ority arouses in a woman either fierce resentment and bitterness or an apathetic indifference to matters in which she is supposed to be incapable of taking either part or interest.

The sense of her responsibilities will therefore do much to fit her for undertaking them. Her opinion in future will count for something ; as a new factor in the electorate it will behove her to see to it that it is worth something. Man must not find it negligible or a mere encumbrance. Already there are numerous organizations for training the less educated to take an intelligent part in the controversies of the day ; their views are widening, and so far we are not hearing of any increase in the cases of neglected children or deserted households as a consequence. If the truly great women of history have not failed in their domestic responsibilities, why should wider interests tend now to that result ? I can remember the time when women's clubs were going to wreak havoc in the home ! The club-woman of the comic papers was represented as spending all the day and most of the night at her club, while her long-suffering husband fed the children and wrestled with recalcitrant domestics. But the comic papers were wrong ; women were not so irresponsible by nature—nor men so long-suffering—as they imagined ; the relative positions on the domestic hearth remained unchanged—and the clubs are still alive.

All over the country women are training themselves to prove worthy as an immediate result of

enfranchisement, under the stimulus of the new responsibility ; and while women's interests are covering a wider radius, including fields that before the war were claimed exclusively by men, the latter seem to be becoming less concerned in the politics of greater England, and more engrossed in the narrower affairs of the trades-unions. So at least we are told by political workers throughout the country. It is possible this is due to the fact that through the trades-union he gets a more direct sense of his own importance, than through the complicated machinery of politics—can feel he is taking a more active part in ruling his fellow-man, than by the mere record of a vote that puts another into power ; and man, never ceasing to be urged by primitive instincts, craves the exercise of his might.

Be the reason what it may, women with intuitive insight have little use for the present form of trades-union—though it has assuredly done useful enough work in its day—and unless man turns his attention back to the field of politics, women may become the stronger factor in the electorate. It may be suggested this first flush of enthusiasm on her part will not be maintained—that it is the enthusiasm of the new broom and will prove as evanescent.

It goes deeper than that. The war has taught her much she did not know before. It has taught her a little about the interdependence of nations ; that no one nation can be vitally affected without other nations—sometimes all other nations—suffering from the reaction. It has brought home to

her, that danger to all she cares for and values may lurk in far-away corners of earth, and that she can now by her own efforts help to avert it. Through the laws of supply and demand, reacting on the necessities of life, she has unconsciously gained a rough insight into economics, and the man of the future will be able to do his arguing on his own hearth instead of with other men at the public-house—not a sufficiently alluring bait perhaps to reconcile the die-hards to the new conditions, but with its advantages economically !

Not only does enfranchisement increase woman's respect for herself, but through the subtle stimulus of suggestion it will also increase man's respect for her. Already, owing to a better education, and her privileges as a citizen with a greater independence of action, man's bearing has perceptibly altered towards the sex that for so long he has thought of as inferior ; a change of attitude of which perhaps he is himself unaware.¹ There may not be quite so eager a giving up of seats in train or motor-omnibus—although this is noticeable only among a certain class of man, or at crowded hours when the omission is quite excusable ; there may be less doffing of hats or opening of doors than in Victorian days, but the essentials of good manners remain, and in the eyes of the observant woman are improving. It was small consolation that in keeping

¹ Since the above was written, working women in the east of London have spontaneously remarked to me on the increased respect of the men's attitude towards them since they have been given the vote.

from her a place in the sun, a man should stand with his hat off while doing it !

He listens now when she speaks, defers to her opinion, treats her far more as an equal who counts, than the man of the last century, whose first impulse, when serious matters were toward, was to tell her to run away and play. Whatever he may have imagined, it is the woman who, well-educated, intelligent, can meet him on his own ground, who commands his deepest respect, and who can hold him through the bond of companionship. He would have found the world a better place long ago if he had realized this fundamental truth, and helped woman on in her venture after self-expression, instead of holding her back.

What real respect could any woman, no matter how capable or intelligent, expect from the uneducated man, who although he might drink himself into incapacity half the days of the week could claim a vote as a member of the electorate, while he knew she was not considered fit to exercise the same privilege ?

With a strange want of insight, the question was sometimes asked—what particular benefit do women think they will derive through enfranchisement ?

Some of the indirect benefits have been enumerated above. The question of direct advantage has already been answered by the surprising celerity with which women have found their way into Parliament as members of the representative body.

The main material advantage of possessing a vote, is that woman has henceforward something

to bestow, something that is wanted by the Parliamentary candidate, something he must make an effort to obtain. I use the masculine pronoun as, for reasons that will be dealt with in a later chapter, women in Parliament will probably be for a long time in a small minority. In a vote she has a lever to her hand for obtaining a hearing. Henceforth she will be a sufficiently potent factor in the electorate to be worth placating; she can no longer be ignored or ridden over roughshod. Not that the roughshod riding was deliberate; but the applicant for Parliament had quite sufficient to occupy his attention in dealing with his own sex who held his aspirations in the hollow of their hands, without troubling himself about the claims of those who were of no use when it came to creating a majority.

Now he must listen, or the forfeit may be the loss of his seat; the saying, so apt that it will bear repetition, "What can they know of Freedom, who only Freedom know?" is the best answer to any male member of the electorate who asks what women want with a vote. It is necessary to have been, as women have been, without the privilege of a vote, to understand the full significance of its acquisition.

The direct benefits of the suffrage will take time in bearing fruit. Eventually, no doubt, the Divorce Laws will be made equally just to man and woman, the mother's rights considered in the law relating to guardianship of children, and other

evils eating at the core of woman's welfare. The victory in these respects is still to be won—the suffrage is but the first step towards it. The increase in the number of divorces in proportion to the population,¹ is a natural result of greater freedom accorded to women. They are no longer under the thrall of the old tradition that the wife must bear any humiliation rather than allow a family scandal to come out into the open. In Queen Victoria's day the wife who had divorced her husband was looked upon almost as much askance as if she were the guilty partner, and had herself been divorced. Between 1876 and 1914 divorces in proportion to the population had more than doubled in their number. By 1919 they had increased to over four times as many as in 1876, but the interval of the war introduced conditions that cannot be taken as normal. Women were losing no time in exercising their new privilege.

Over twenty years ago La Clavière predicted that women with greater freedom would on an average marry much later, which is certainly the case.

He writes: "If they believe . . . that the obedience they owe has well-defined limits; if they are no longer the burden which a father used to get rid of as soon as possible, and which a husband received as his absolute property, body and soul; if they desire to count for something; if marriage is regarded as the union of two persons equally free . . . ; if the wife is no longer the pupil of her hus-

¹ Registrar's report.

band and it is considered better for her to come to him fully instructed ; then a very natural consequence will inevitably ensue, whatever may be thought or said ; women will marry later, will insist on exercising a choice as men do, and on laying down their own conditions ; they will in this way imagine that they have greater freedom, and are probably making a better bargain, for they have become women of sense.”¹

La Clavière knew what he was talking about. The marriage of girls at the age of seventeen or eighteen is rare to-day, compared with thirty or forty years ago ; it is no longer forced on them as the main object of a woman’s life, and circumstances so arranged that it was almost unavoidable.

The adjustment of inequality in reward where the work is of equal merit will some day prove the value of a vote as a fighting asset. Where the labourers are equally worthy of their hire, sex has no business to intrude itself into the argument. If the woman can do the work as well as a man, why should her employer benefit because she lives at home, and may not be obliged to contribute so much to the household expenses as if she lived “out” ? Is a bachelor paid a lower salary than a married man ? To underpay the woman is a sin against both sexes, keeping men out of employment, that the employers may benefit. Men and women must meet on the same ground, regardless of sex, and where physical disability affects the

¹ *The Women of the Renaissance.* De Maulde la Clavière.

quality or quantity of the work, let the reward be adjudged on that basis, not on an arbitrary and unfair basis of sex.

Such injustices lead to a sex-war wholly to be deplored. In literature and the stage, men and women meet on equal ground, the reward won by merit only with no consideration of sex shown either way. The result aimed at in all lines should be to get the very best for the good of the country ; if sex be allowed to overshadow merit, it is the community that is the loser in the long run.

To read the pamphlets dealing with the substitution of women in industry during the war and the terms in which their capabilities are described, is a curious contrast to the belittling of them when their services were no longer wanted. In their way women feel they did as much as the men, for without their services it is doubtful if victory would have been ours. When permitted they took their risks as courageously as the other sex, worked willingly day or night, and proved themselves true helpmeets in every sense of the word.

The long years of subjection and the doctrine of inferiority have eaten deeply into woman's soul, and the scars will remain for some time to come. Her submission to inadequate reward for work equal to man's is the outcome of it, and nothing will tend more to lift the shadow of this age-long suggestion, than the privilege of enfranchisement acting as a counter-stimulus on the minds of both sexes. There are undoubtedly many

incompetent women, unfit to form opinions and exercise the new right ; but the same may be said of the other sex, many of whom, even among the educated classes, use their vote exclusively to promote their own interests. There are possibly a greater number of what may be called stupid women in proportion to numbers than men ; but the reasons are two-fold—there are more of them, and Prof. Galton's statistics show that increase of numbers in such cases tends to lower the average—and the result of their past limitations, narrower experience of the world, want of education, and parasitical tendencies owing to enforced dependence, have naturally stultified any intelligence that may have been inherent. The stupidest man in ordinary society can generally talk “shop” of some kind if he can talk nothing else, and any subject exploited by one who is really familiar with it can be interesting. A dull-minded woman with no “shop” falls back perforce on the household details which are the beginning and end of her interests, and which bore even those they concern, much more so those they do not.

Not that housekeeping should be decried, especially if brains be put into it, but it need not form the one absorbing topic. During the war it became a kind of sport in which men and women alike were interested ; there was the same sort of precariousness about it as there is in “shooting for the pot.” Men are too apt to take it as a matter of course in normal times, whereas there must always

be a certain power of organization behind a well-ordered establishment.

The extension of the suffrage must inevitably increase the dignity of womanhood and inspire loftier methods in their striving after self-expression. Already we hear less of the old cry that woman—especially pretty woman—has all the power of the universe in her hands; that with Cleopatras and Delilahs as examples woman need ask for no more direct methods of getting her own way. If the hand that rocks the cradle had really ruled the universe, the laws would not bear so unmistakable an impress of being man-made.

And could any sentiment be more belittling to both? To exploit her sex-attractions for the purpose of attaining her own ends is to degrade one of the sublimest of God's creations, and women worthy of the name have always turned from such devices with repugnance; although, sometimes forced in the interests of others, the most high-principled have been obliged to make use of them as the only weapon left to her by man's laws. Enfranchisement has opened the door to more worthy expedients; she can claim the law-maker's attention through the lever of the vote, instead of buying it with her smiles, and if the Suffrage would confer no greater benefit than that she has reason to be grateful to it.

It will certainly lead to other reforms besides those of divorce and guardianship; concessions to woman's individuality as a responsible citizen

will follow, not the protective legislation that has taken no wider view of her status than as a possible wife and mother. In some cases it will be for the benefit of the husband. With independence of action and the right to manage her own property, men should no longer be held responsible for the debts of an extravagant wife, and incidentally, when through the direct handling of money the laws of finance become less of an enigma to women and they learn the value of it, they will become less extravagant. Men themselves are not so careful in the spending of other people's money but that they might have understood that ignorance as often as not was the cause of a wife's apparently irresponsible squandering, and that it is very difficult to be really conscientiously economical, unaware of how far that economy is really necessary, through ignorance of everything relating to her husband's financial position.

These matters will take time and cannot be forced. The Suffrage must not be expected to act as a magic philtre. True reform must always come from within if there is to be any degree of stability in it ; it cannot be imposed from without. The centuries during which the stream of suggestion flowed steadily in one direction cannot immediately be wiped out by the mere passing of Acts. It is not to be expected that men of a race cradled in serfdom and feudalism, and who for the most part still instinctively look upon their wives as their property, will throw off in a moment convictions

that have become bone of their bone. The mere giving of the vote is no conjuring trick ; how women use that vote will be the modifying agent.

But a new note has been definitely sounded, of deep psychological import, for with every step that brings man and woman nearer to equality, we leave barbarism farther behind.

The power of suggestion acting through the brain on the nerves and muscles of the body for either good or evil, is to-day universally admitted. It is an old truth, old as the most ancient of philosophies, either of East or West. It is a source of power that, had the world realized it in its entirety during its infancy when men's passions were still in the raw, would have led to untold disasters. To the force of suggestion civilizations have owed their downfall ; men have unconsciously used it for their own ends, both good and ill, since time was ; its potency is hinted at in all the sacred writings, including our own most cryptic of books, the Bible.

If it can affect the grosser organs of the physical body, its influence on the more fluid constituents of brain and mind are still more marked. The psychology of crowds acting entirely on mental suggestion has provided one of the fields for the study of this phenomenon.

Thought, with the manifestation of every other force in nature, is a transmutation of vibrations of the ether of a certain rate, into vibrations of a more rapid rate, through the working of that marvellous mill, the brain. What is called dense matter,

scientists now tell us, is vibratory ether differentiated, more or less, by the rapidity of its vibration, the electron of negative electricity in conjunction with a nucleus of positive electricity being the "brick" from which all degrees of dense matter are raised.¹ The brain stimulated into action, by outside forces or by man's will, in generating thought actually wastes the physical tissues, necessitating a re-stoking of the fires within. This replenishing of exhausted tissues is accomplished through the supply of physical matter in the shape of food, which is again transmuted by mysterious processes into thought vibrations which are sent forth, each type with its own particular keynote, into the world. Every one knows that one of the immediate results of strenuous brain-work is the same hunger that assails the worker with muscle and sinew, due to the waste of tissue which equally is a part of the physical body.

How then is it possible to regard thought as an imponderable abstraction, when so much of so-called dense matter is absorbed in its generation?

And the vibrations one brain can generate, another can absorb, or respond to—and does. The expression "the thing is in the air" is familiar to all of us, when some opinion, started apparently from nowhere, spreads with astonishing rapidity, gaining force as it goes, unless suddenly checked by another opinion equally forceful and directly adverse. Brains are unceasingly assimilating un-

¹ Kelvin Lecture, 1922, Sir E. Rutherford.

consciously vibrations from other brains, sufficiently penetrating and forceful to have eaten up physical tissues in their generation.

The power of thought—a force running in the same groove for centuries, handed on by millions to millions of mankind, gaining strength with every decade, becomes a dynamic agency of immense potency. It is little wonder that poor Mary Wollstonecraft made little headway when by her *Vindication of the Rights of Women* she first attempted to alter its keynote with regard to woman's status. As well try to drown the shriek of a syren with a penny whistle. It has taken over a hundred years of hard fighting to penetrate the barriers of prejudice and tradition, set up by the suggestion of woman's inferiority. This fundamental law of vibration was known and referred to in Eastern philosophies long before it penetrated to Western brains. It is spoken of cryptically, and sometimes unmistakably, in many of the most ancient writings.

"The words of the wise are like the seven notes of the lyre which contain all music, along with the numbers and the laws of the Universe"¹ was among the doctrines taught to the Egyptian hierophant, in the ancient civilization. That the laws of the Universe are contained in the seven notes of the octave, is the fundamental hypothesis, poetically expressed, of science to-day. At the eighth note we pass presumably from the octave to the notes of which our five senses can respond,

¹ Hermetic doctrines.

to a higher octave in the ever-mounting scale, beyond the cognisance of physical organs, but obedient to laws essentially the same although different perhaps in degree to those governing the octave below.

Is it not conceivable that woman, with her intuitions, vision, her evolution through struggles with the enemies of the higher consciousness, less in touch with matter than man with his keen senses, and the power to take what is his, may be more nearly attuned to that higher octave, more susceptible to vibrations of a more subtle order. Her admitted power of intuition is not wholly due to an environment calculated to develop a more acute perception of variation in the conditions in which she finds herself. The spontaneity of the inception of those intuitions for—as she will tell you—“no reason at all,” argues a source of inspiration beyond the reach of those who are not subject to them.

A certain philosophy offers an explanation of this essential difference between man and woman, but it is perhaps of too speculative a nature to go into here. It may be the iron of subjection during ages past, entering into her soul, has turned her eyes upward, and the desire for a more satisfying world has strung the keynote of her being to a higher pitch. Whatever the cause of it, she certainly has a “vision” and insight into the future often wanting in man, living so much more in and for the moment and with a keener appreciation of what matter can give.

And with these finer intuitions civilization must always spell more to woman than to man. Her mind, once educated, will always turn desperately from the wash-tub, the darning, the cooking of food, which is all that primitive conditions can offer her, towards the refinements and greater access to beauty in all its forms, which are the prizes of civilization; whereas man, civilized, cultured, intellectually developed though he may be, will throw regretful glances over his shoulder towards the barbarism that gave him free hunting and fishing, encounters with his neighbour of a more exhilarating nature than is afforded by big guns at long range, and hand-to-hand struggles with the physical matter he was born to subdue. Man may sometimes wish to return to a primitive world, primitive himself at heart; woman, never!

Barbarism opens doors to men; it closes them to women. The fiery young male creature may have found a certain zest in the highway-man or duel of the past; the only excitement woman could draw from such episodes was a helpless anxiety she could well have done without. She can close down the page of her past history without regrets. With the Suffrage as a beginning to something still greater, it is to be hoped she will throw off the burden of indirect methods, insincere professions, and the whole armoury of cajolery, and with clear honest eyes look out at a future in which she is standing at man's side—no longer trailing behind him.

CHAPTER XVII

THE "SPHINX WITHOUT A SECRET"

Having given some slight indication of what the franchise will do for women, it will be well to consider what women will do for the franchise—that is to say, how in benefiting the sex the country will equally benefit. As every revolutionary change must have its reaction, the effect of woman's entry into the electorate—which was nothing short of a revolution—cannot be negligible; it must be in some degree for either good or evil.

The plea for equality should be taken to mean, equality in status and opportunity. Where in certain essentials there must always be dissimilarity, a general comparison with regard to equality is hedged with difficulty. Women have certain inherent qualities which men have not and never will have, besides those acquired through an environment by which man in his search for self-expression has not been restricted. A quality in the one sex may outweigh in merit and working capacity some quality in the other of a totally dissimilar character. If you take a flower conspicuous for its beauty and colour, and another whose chief merit lies in its perfume, who is to say

which is the superior? It is only by putting man on one side of the scales, and woman on the other, and by adjustment here, elimination there, that we can get the balance even. Taking it all round, the steam-hammer cannot claim to be a superior instrument to the typewriter; each has its good points and its shortcomings. The steam-hammer with certain work to be done may have its moments of triumph, but would be helpless when faced with the tasks, quite as important in their way, for which the typewriter is fitted. Moreover, if the steam-hammer should come down on the typewriter, there would be no more typewriter; while the latter might beat its little hammers for ever impotently against the mass of the other. But, except under played-out conditions where might is right, that does not necessarily imply any real inferiority, as an instrument, in the typewriter. Such standards of comparison are impossible.

In the matter of strength of physique, woman can never hope to be man's equal, and did she become so, would lose some of the valuable attributes which now belong exclusively to her sex; she is very foolish when she tries to ape him; the woman who professes to despise him most is often the first to do so! It is possibly a form of protest against the constricting conventions that have tied her down in the past, a kicking over the traces, a gauntlet thrown in defiance of public opinion rather than a deliberate imitation. Where it is confined to a matter of clothes, there are excuses

to be made ; for the purposes of active life a man's clothes are more convenient. Petticoats combined with high winds are sufficiently chastening in themselves to fit women for any place in life of which fighting against odds is a part !

I remember an old Victorian lady shaking her head censoriously at a mention of Rosa Bonheur. She would neither admit her genius nor admire her pictures—because, it transpired, when painting the “Horse Fair” on top of a step-ladder she wore trousers !

Even if through evolutionary processes woman's physique should be developed to the point of starting as man's equal in physical strength—and some of the athletic young women of to-day seem bidding fair to do so—the drain on her strength inevitable in maternity would reduce her, individually, to the old level. No sex with such a strain upon its physical resources could possibly compete with one from which that penalty is not exacted, and in this situation we have an example of the difficulties of comparison already mentioned.

Maternity, although entailing a further reduction of woman's physical strength in its results, bestows compensating advantages. Calling into play a calm courage little dreamt of by the sex who takes it all so much as a matter of course, the physical strength expended becomes transmuted into moral qualities, often unconsciously to the chief agent. No one, except through experience, can fathom

the poignancy of the sensations unavoidable to prospective motherhood for the first time—the recurrent terror, generally in the night when human fortitude is at its lowest ebb, of an inevitable unknown, borne as a rule secretly, silently, even with a shame—for months, with death perhaps waiting at the end. There are insensitive, unimaginative natures, to whom a present inconvenience is all that matters; but there are thousands and thousands of those others who, in spite of an anticipation of a compensating beyond, through those months of perturbed uncertainty are acquiring qualities of strength and courage, moral and physical, that must become woven into the fibre of their being, and that in dealing with the vicissitudes of civil life should prove of more value than mere muscle and sinew.

This aspect of maternity is not often taken into account, but, without enlarging on it here, a sex the present generation of which have known by experience the physical courage required for, and suspense involved by, the awaiting of unknown dangers during the war, ought to be able to visualize, to a certain extent, the fortitude required by a young woman—perhaps hardly out of her teens—in a test requiring an equal fortitude without the excitements of the more active forms of warfare. Such experiences leave their mark on men, and do so no less on women, the different lines of evolution being again indicated—man's the definite fight with

matter, woman's with the less defined, less material forces of the mind—the terror of the unknown her chief enemy.

Physiological differences must always prove a handicap to the feminine sex in some respects, and the mistake has been in the effort to claim woman's equality along the lines of similarity. Where would be the advantage of this to the world or the community? A mere increase in quantity would be the result, instead of a potential improvement in quality. If woman is not going to supply what man lacks—is only going to add to what he already has, the advantage gained by an admitted equality may prove of value to herself, but will only to that extent benefit the community. Man and woman are the complement of one another, neither complete without the other. It is owing to the tradition of inferiority, to the sneers in the nursery, and the subjection of after life, that woman has instinctively strained after, and preached, an equality along lines similar to man, instead of taking up her true position of supplementing attributes in which he is lacking.

And in considering the point—is woman as well equipped as man for taking her share in the government of her country, there is one question that may pertinently be asked.

Has the country's history gone to prove that man himself is so thoroughly well equipped for the position?

Have the British people been so perfectly

governed that man betrays no chinks in his armour ?

Has the result of all his defences, foresight, statesmanship, oratory and diplomacy, culminating through ever-recurrent little wars in the great European convulsion just experienced, proved the perfection of his equipment for the ruling of nations and democracies ?

Woman, in considering the nature of her own equipment, might well look for a higher standard than that offered by the other sex in the past experiences of so-called civilization. Can anyone, looking impartially at the world to-day, instance it as a proof of man's capacity for successful government ?

Again, why reduce the question to a point of crude comparison ? It would be better to consider whether woman, in claiming equality, is not justified by what she can contribute to the whole, without attempting to ignore some undoubted limitations ; they should be counterbalanced by the qualities developed through centuries of her chastening environment.

Her physiological limitations are so obvious it appears almost superfluous to refer to them.

Less strength and toughness in the fibre of muscle and nerve spells less power of physical endurance, less capability for feats of strength in moving and wrestling with matter. Women accomplished wonders, even along these lines, when performing man's work during the war—as can be seen in some

of the pamphlets issued on the subject,¹—but with a smaller physique, differences in structure, and other physiological disabilities, the average woman can never expect to rival the physical strength of bone and body of the average man—not to mention the calls of maternity which, for the time being, must incapacitate her to a certain degree for the strain of public work.

But the very disability that forbids her from meeting man on his own ground in the matter of physical strength, gives her a delicacy of touch, and a facility of adaptability, in which he, with his coarser-fibred muscles and nerves, is wanting. In many cases work formerly performed by men, and taken on by women during the war, has remained in their hands, owing to their superiority in neatness, deftness and quickness of movement; and where such positions are obtained and held by merit alone, and not through the illicit methods of inadequate pay, they have a perfect right to them, unless man wishes to degenerate into a “spoon-fed” sex.

For physiological reasons women will never beat men—or equal them—in running or jumping, swimming, or other forms of athletics where muscular strength is the essential; she will never drive so long a ball at golf, and when she indulges in displays of football or even hockey, she is proving more obviously to the impartial onlooker what she

¹ Home Office and Board of Trade pamphlets on the substitution of women in industry for enlisted men.

cannot do than what she can. In mixed games, where muscle plays a part, man never puts out his full strength. A woman's record in some particular form of athletics may become her average in the succeeding generation, but man's record, so far as can be at present foreseen, and average, will always keep well ahead of her. Again—in her efforts to prove her equality she has drifted automatically into the lines of similarity, instead of adopting those in which she ought to be far more capable of excelling—such as billiards. She has proved her accuracy of hand and eye at other games, why does she not excel at billiards? Not that her inability to rival man is any valid reason for her abstention from any form of athletic exercise which she, according to the taste of her generation, chooses to adopt; from games and gymnastic performances there is to be extracted far more than a mere development of muscle and poise, and, if her wishes lie that way, she has a right to indulge them.

This disability in the matter of physiology must, to a certain extent, affect her efforts in public life, her degree of endurance of physical strain be less than that of man. But is this of vital importance?

It has been argued that women would be incapable of the physical strain of a seat in Parliament, the conduct of important businesses and so on, because the calls of maternity and other conditions might temporarily incapacitate them from carrying

on their public duties. But their disabilities in these respects seem so far to be proving not so pronounced as it has been the custom to suppose.¹

And that surely may be left to Nature's adjustment. Those women who would be so incapacitated will not attempt to sit in Parliament; there are many men to whom a Parliamentary career, either for physical reasons or otherwise, would be quite unsuitable. There will be always, for these reasons, probably fewer women in Parliament than men, but their health will not render them unfit, at the least, to register a vote; it is certainly no reason for denying them a voice in the election of a representative. Equality of opportunity is what they have asked, and the chance to prove they are capable of contributing to the government of their country attributes quite as valuable as muscular strength.

The question of an equal potentiality for brain power seems for the moment to lead to no definite answer either way, but the evidence so far as it proves anything, is presumably in woman's favour.

It was thought at one time that the weight of a brain was the determining factor in its value as a working instrument, and as an average male brain weighs forty-nine ounces and a half, and the female average is forty-four,² it was suggested the female must be the inferior organ. Experiments with regard to the working powers of the brain are

¹ *Emancipation of English Women.* W. Lyon Blease.

² Harmsworth's *Encyclopædia.*

very difficult of accomplishment, for the obvious reason that when it is possible to experiment and observe, the brain is no longer working ! But while the conclusions of inferiority as decided by weight were considered valid, it was admitted that the weight must be compared with the weight of the body, and further admitted that a stout or heavy person was not necessarily intellectual above the ordinary ; even that a large or small head had nothing to do with brain capacity.

At birth the brain of the infant is heavy in proportion to its body, increases rapidly with the body in weight for seven years, more slowly up to the twentieth year, and more slowly still until the fortieth. After that it decreases, very slowly ; all of which would seem to argue that the weight of it is more nearly connected with the development and deterioration of the physical body than with the intellectual capacity inherent in the brain itself.

Certainly there have been instances of an abnormally heavy brain in cases of marked intellectuality—notably that of Cuvier, weighing sixty-four ounces ; but there have been equally remarkable instances of unusual brain power with abnormally small heads. The fact of the unusual weight of Cuvier's brain would prove nothing in a comparison of the sexes, as the weight of no unusually intellectual woman, such as George Eliot, Mme. de Staël, or Mary Somerville—I take the names at random—seems to have been recorded. The past circumstances of her growth in an artificial environment

would have been sufficient to prevent a normal development of the organ of mentality in the average woman. As sight and hearing, and, it is presumed, all the other senses, are more or less dormant at birth, and a linking-up of the brain cells through the exercise of the will or unconscious desire is necessary before the functional machinery can be set working—apart from the reflex actions which have nothing to do with the will—it follows to reason that the greater or lesser development of the brain must depend on the extent and variety of stimuli applied to it; where opportunity for such stimuli is wanting, a paucity of result would naturally follow, and we are again thrown back on the original query as to whether woman's alleged shortcomings are really due to inherent limitations or to an unsympathetic environment.

Modern science decides there is more significance in the convolutions of the brain than in its weight. Some brains have a great many more convolutions than others, and it would be interesting to know whether comparisons have been made between the convolutions on male or female, and if so, whether there is any enlightening difference between, not only the average male and female brain, which may mean only a difference in opportunity for development, but in brains of marked intellectuality in both sexes.

However the argument may wage, the fact remains that, given opportunity, woman has proved the capability of her brain to mount to heights

not excelled by man's. In literature where, as already shown, she has had most opportunity, she has won laurels culled from identically the same bush as those used for man's adornment. To judge by the rapidity with which the arena is filling, woman's energies have been a Red Sea, held back by arbitrary forces, awaiting only the moment of release to seek their true level through natural processes. The actual fibre of her mental capacity, the substance of the brain, may and probably does share the physiological characteristics of her body; it would certainly seem so, as the weight of the brain apparently waxes and wanes in proportion to similar changes of the body. This would mean that the female organ might not stand prolonged strain so well as that of the male—that in many individual cases during the war the opposite was the case proves nothing either way—but would not preclude it from reaching heights equal to any reached by the heavier, tougher instrument at man's service.

On the other hand, through the *ultra* delicacy of its fabric, presumably sensitive to vibrations of greater subtlety, it may possibly contact levels beyond man's reach altogether, offering a clue, as has already been suggested, to the undoubted powers of intuition, and the source of the inspiration to which man has admitted his indebtedness through the symbology of the nine Muses and the Egerias of all ages. Much of the ancient mythology was an instinctive expression of an underlying truth.

The more delicate instrument, given at last free play, and undisturbed by emotions turned back on themselves for want of proper outlet, should prove as valuable to a Government as the instrument of greater staying power. If anyone should throw serious doubt upon the capacity inherent in the brain of woman, it is only necessary to point to her achievements as the best argument in her favour. It is futile to discuss theoretically whether the female brain is capable of performances equal to man's while she is beating him in the open field on all sides. She has beaten him in University honours, in medical examinations, and her latest struggle in the arena of the law placed her at the head of the list. Such discussion calls to mind the old story of the monastery, shaken to its foundations by the vituperant arguments between the monks, as to why, when a cup was full of water to the point of overflowing, a rose-leaf placed on the water did not make it overflow and spill over the cup's edge. Science and logic argued hotly as to the reason for this phenomenon, and equally proved their case, but when the experiment was put into practice, it was found the water *did* overflow !

One of the signs of the growing mental activity among women is the increase in the number of female inventors. Women are now allowed to qualify as patent agents, and a branch of the Institute of Patentees has been opened for them. It is said their inventions compare favourably with

those of men. There is now a woman's Engineering Society, with its own publication, from which I quote the following: "For the first time in the history of engineering women have been encouraged to invent, and the results have been most gratifying."¹

There are women explorers, company-directors, business managers, all proving their worth to the community they serve; not to mention doctors, and the artists and musicians the standard of whose work is mounting rapidly with the greater freedom and incentive to study of the new conditions. Since the beginning of the century an amazing influx of the sex has taken place into the world of art and literature. It would be invidious to particularize in any of the lines mentioned, but it is surely going to be a better and a saner world for the change. Half the weaknesses so long supposed to be inevitable to the sex—the nerves, vapours, hysterias, that presumably unfitted them for public work—were due to the repression of emotions and impulses within them due to their environment. A busy woman is rarely hysterical or ailing. The writers and painters, doctors and musicians of to-day are far too keen and interested in their work to have time to be ill. The war proved that much. Women in the presence of their country's need found their ailments melting like snow in the sunshine when real work was there to occupy their minds and energies.

¹ *The Woman Engineer*, March, 1922.

Every mind and every brain cries for stimulus ; it is the law of evolution—the fulcrum for progress. Faculties of the brain kept working will evolve ; allowed to fall into disuse, will atrophy. With a narrow outlook, resulting from inadequate education, the radius of possible stimuli is circumscribed ; the sources of the excitement craved by the brain are fewer and the organ is bound to become stunted in feeling and activity.

Where there is hardly any widening of interests through education or experience, these sources are reduced to the excitement to be extracted from the police reports, the misfortunes of others, weddings, and *faute de mieux*, funerals. It is difficult to find excitement in the wash-tub or boiling of potatoes ! Women of the uneducated classes were forced to derive all the stimulus their brains craved from these incidents in life ; the more—though still inadequately—educated woman found hers in introspection, self-centred interests, and the sympathy and attention demanded by weak nerves and temperamental cyclones.

Her brain was calling for the exercise incidental to intellectual development ; adventure, experience of other worlds, other countries, of competition and achievement just as vehemently as man's ; all these emotions, thrown back on herself, called for control, not to mention those inevitably aroused by the incidents of everyday life. Doctors are apt to pronounce women hysterical and unreliable as a sex, but by virtue of their office they can never

be fair judges of female psychology, as only the abnormal and diseased come under their special observation.

But is it fair to consider one sex more "emotional"—by which is generally meant uncontrolled—than the other? Quite lately a woman-juror's tears at the moment of a death sentence in Court produced protesting letters, advancing the incident as an argument against drawing jurors from a sex that could exercise so little self-control.

In the memoirs of a well-known Admiral, published about a year ago, is the account of a marine who fainted at the sight of a man being flogged. In the woman's case, the words spoken by the judge were quite sufficient to conjure up to the woman the whole scene that would be afterwards enacted, and being perhaps more imaginative than the marine, it did not require the scene itself to bring her emotions to the surface.

Perhaps too a smile may drift across the eyes of the "Sphinx without a secret" as she thinks of lost trains, elusive collar-studs and short putts missed, and wonders if there is so much difference between a flow of tears and a flow of language!

The small incidents of a woman's life have been an inexhaustible opportunity for the exercise of self-control. How would men meet the continual and exasperating interruptions which are incidental to running a household, and in spite of which women will write books, compose music and paint pictures, either in obedience to the imperative desire

for self-expression, or to obtain the money required for others' needs ?

How would he who must not be interrupted in the writing of a letter like to be at the beck and call of every domestic faced with a trifling household problem ?—to know that he may be broken in upon at any moment to be told the butcher has not called, and what is to be done—and that if the interruption be forbidden there probably will not be any dinner ! The absence of dinner might certainly provide an excellent opportunity for the husband's self-control, but such methods would be against the time-honoured traditions of how to make marriage a success.

The emotions lie under the control of the brain, the brain of the will ; a stimulus constantly applied in the same direction by the latter and acting through the brain on the emotions becomes a habit, the acquirement of which is within reach of either sex.

In the matter of physical strength and toughness of fibre, women will never rival men ; but that the former attributes contribute more to effective government than the qualities women can offer in their place, time has yet to decide.

CHAPTER XVIII

WOMAN'S CODE OF ETHICS—AND MAN'S

Man's profound ignorance of the psychology of women, of the causes producing the effects that so often appear to him unreasonable and unfathomable, is in some directions quite inexplicable, while in others it is obviously natural. Since woman has found her voice, and through a series of mild shocks, he has discovered she is not the least what he thought she was, man has been inclined to profess no longer to understand her—not, at least, after he has reached the age of twenty-one!—but he approaches the most superficial attempt to analyse her nature with a half-humorous twinkle in his eye as a protest that so unimportant a subject should be taken seriously.

That he has never understood her had its root in the great initial mistake of supposing her to have been put into the world entirely for his benefit, recognizing no individual rights of her own. To be wife, mother and general servant he quite excusably presumed to be the whole aim and point of her existence. To carry on the race—in the performance of which proportionately few years of a woman's life are absorbed—and when not so

occupied minister to his needs. Primitive man having settled so much, it followed that no true woman could possibly have any interests or aspirations outside that circle. He imagined nature had decreed that limitation ; whereas it was himself—and having decreed it, he came honestly to believe it, and his sons and grandsons were taught to believe it and handed on the convenient theory to further generations who also believed it.

Having laid down what woman ought to be, and therefore was, he refused to recognize any symptoms that did not fit in with this definition of her position in the Universe. That she might be driven by desires, susceptible to cravings similar to his own, was not to be found in the book of rules for the interpretation of the female sex ; her delineation in the encyclopædias of the Stone Age would doubtless have been sketched in on simple lines, without side issues—an adaptable creature, meant by Heaven to give as little trouble as possible, and not quite happy unless holding on to somebody's hand. Any complexities of character, any wish to strain after man's particular prerogative, being very inconvenient would be best discouraged, and the simplest way to discourage them was to say they were not there.

Having buried the key he was then astonished to find himself confronted by a riddle apparently insoluble.

But while man was making his fancy maps of a country he had never taken the trouble to explore, woman was busy, charting shoals and rocks, in seas

with which in her own interests she intended to become perfectly familiar ; home waters, through which she proposed to sail in safety through an intimate knowledge of where lay the chief dangers. She learnt to sense the coming storm as acutely as any sea-bird ; when it was more prudent to bow before it and let it expend itself on things that did not matter ; or to stand firm in the very teeth of it. She learnt to pilot her craft through narrow channels out into blue water, and that a ruffled surface betrayed a hidden snag it were better to avoid. And these charts were handed down—the Sphinx has charge of them—and that is why you hear men talk so much more nonsense about women than women do about men.

To realize that this is so it is only necessary to study the curiously contradictory statements of man about women in the books he has devoted to the subject. His opinion of them has always been tinctured by his own attitude. They have been goddesses, angels, slaves or devils, according to his mood. He has taken all their emotions at their face value, never suspecting deeply rooted causes that might put upon them a totally different complexion. According to his book of the rules, they fall in with man's wishes, bear his infidelities, and make his interests their own, and all the time enjoy it. He calls it "adaptability"—as if any human beings could *like* doing what they do not want to do ! Man does not even begin to realize how largely an ordinary woman's life is made up of

sacrifice, and that the secret of many frowns and sighs lies in the never-ending strain of doing uncongenial things as if you liked it.

The book of rules says she ought to like it—and there is an end of it. So the sighs and frowns are ruled unreasonable, and put down to caprice, and we have anthologies on women, and “guides” to women, and books on the “uneasy” sex, discussing the riddle of her, with the key to it buried under the weight of prejudice and ignorance that has been accumulating ever since Vashti dropped her squib among the Princes of Persia.

And for want of the key we get such enlightenment as follows from the authors of the book of rules, collected by W. H. Beveridge in *John and Irene, or Thoughts on Women*.

“There are at least three real saints among the women to one amongst the men.¹

“One good woman in ten.²

“The man who trusts a woman trusts a cheat.³

“You may chisel a boy into anything as you would a rock, or hammer him into it, if he be of the better kind, as you would a piece of bronze. But you cannot hammer a girl into anything. She grows as a flower does. . . .⁴

“A woman, a dog and a walnut-tree, the more you beat ’em the better they be!⁵

“For craft and treachery a woman’s best.⁶

¹ O. W. Holmes.

² Shakespeare.

³ Hesiod.

⁴ Ruskin.

⁵ Old Proverb.

⁶ Æschylus.

“Men make the laws, women make morals.”¹

“Men and women have been cast in the same mould.”²

“Cancel from your mind every idea of your superiority to woman.”³

“We have spoilt women by treating them far too well. It was wrong of us to put them on a level with ourselves.”⁴

This last from Napoleon, suffering perhaps from the sting of Mme. de Staël's pen!

From such contradictory reflections on women, of which the examples are endless, it is not easy to extract any very valuable conclusions; none of them betray any real depth of study; anything more in fact than hasty pronouncements instigated by the mood of the moment, be it bitter or sweet.

Secundus—falling surely far short of his profession as a philosopher?—betrays perhaps the nastiest temper of all; one can only wonder what particular domestic cataclysm lay at the roots of it.

“Woman is a beast that eats with you; a care that wakes with you; a shame that abides with you; a lion to watch; a viper clothed; a penance by day; a disturber of quiet; a storm in the house; a rock of shipwreck to the weak; a fair-seeming Fury; a painted Scylla; faithless in love; destructive of wealth; a costly warfare; an evil creature; a necessary plague.” Such a pronouncement does not lead to a revision of one's preconceived ideas

¹ Guibert.

² Montaigne.

³ Mazzini.

⁴ Napoleon.

of women ; only to a suspicion that Secundus must have eaten something that did not agree with him.

Man, disappointed in some particular woman, is possibly more apt to condemn the whole sex on the strength of it than woman in the same position ; indicating that where his feelings are concerned—in such cases vanity more often than love—his sense of justice does not remain so unassailable as he would have us believe. Women are far less prone to condemn wholesale, where true justice would limit to the particular ; where she is found—unfortunately—inveighing against the male sex as a whole, her plaint is generally based on his injustice towards her sex in the matter of legislation and equality of status. It is true a woman's motive is more difficult to fathom, as convention forbids her to wear her heart on her sleeve.

But as a woman speaking of women, in my experience those who have been “ let down ” by some particular man do not include the sweeping indictment of the whole sex in their indignation that seems so often to afford consolation to the male breast. Whatever may be said to the contrary, a sense of justice is not wanting in woman ; the very injustices of which she herself has been the victim have sharpened the edge of an intuitive perception of where true justice lies, not only towards herself but towards others. She has possibly a nimbler imagination which jumps at sidelights, and may sometimes confuse issues.

Can a sex that has made one-sided laws and

led one-sided opinion for centuries lay claim to a fully developed sense of justice?—whose only justification for such legislative inequalities lay in the alleged supremacy of might over right.

Women's morals are built upon ethical foundations rather than codes. Their sense of honour and standards of honourable dealing are equal to man's, although not running in absolutely parallel lines. Man's contention that women have no sense of honour has been a source of deep resentment to a sex who cannot retaliate in any effective manner, and who consider many of his codes to be less fundamentally sound than her own standards. He will never succeed in persuading women that cheating at cards is more dishonourable than telling lies to the woman he has sworn to cherish and honour; yet the former appears to be the unforgivable sin, while the latter is regarded as a joke, the keynote of most comedies, and not accounted a sufficient reason for ostracism by his fellow-men. When the situation is reversed, and the woman deceives her husband, it does not appear to be nearly so amusing!

There are many things in man's fancy maps that woman would put her pen through. All women are not guilty of the little meannesses with which they are so often credited; it depends entirely on the individual and on what class of woman is in question. As well judge the whole business world by the misdemeanours of some dishonest minor tradesmen—and when the meannesses are practised they are

not condoned by those among the sex who set the standards. Women who practise them are avoided, and if they happen to be good-looking, the other sex is apt to attribute the avoidance to jealousy ! When a woman is avoided by her own sex there are excellent reasons for it ; woman knows her fellow-woman as no man will ever know her ! It may be jealousy, but of another sort ; every straight-living woman is passionately jealous for the honour of her sex, and proportionately resentful towards those who do not uphold it. There is more of this at the back of women's strictures on one another than man has supposed ; it is almost invariably absent from the book of rules for the guidance of his sex !

The codes recognized by individual man seem at curious variance with those of man collectively, as represented by governments ; and the curious psychology of committees would fill a book in itself. As a body they will perpetrate injustices and iniquities that no single member would be guilty of individually. An admixture of women may tend to elevate rather than lower the standard of governing bodies both great and small ; man will always endeavour to present the best side of himself in the presence of women and sink the worse, at all events for the time being, which may be the first step in establishing a habit.

A bare investigation into the comparative virtues of the two sexes can never result in any convincing proof of equality when the question to be decided

is capacity for government; all we can do is to inquire whether the unfailing law of compensation will make the balance even. In his *History of European Morals*, Lecky, summing up on the subject of such comparison, inclines the scales, whether consciously or unconsciously, amazingly on the side of the female sex, taking it as a whole, although certainly confusing some results of the environment from which she has suffered with the limitations laid down by nature.

Of these, his main contention for women's inferiority is based upon the old cry that up to the year in which the book was written no woman had signally distinguished herself in the fields of art or music—although admitting her achievements in literature. With that point we have already dealt. It is a shortcoming that time shows every sign of proving was due to the limitations in opportunity for development in the past, the necessary technique for suitable expression offering insurmountable difficulties where no facilities for its attainment were within reach. Some people may urge that such attainments are, after all, quite outside the requisite equipment for good government. It is true that painters and musicians are rarely to be found taking active part in the politics of nations—although during the years of the war there were some notable exceptions in Europe—but that is probably due to want of time. We have advanced beyond the era when anything outside what we could see and hear with our physical organs was called

hysterics, and there is no doubt the man or woman of artistic temperament is in sensitive touch with the emotions that stir and actuate others. If a world be made up of all sorts no less should a Government be, and if it were possible to prove woman's brain incapable of the finer modes of expression, it would assuredly point to an inferiority with regard to her powers of mentality that should be detrimental to her value as a governing factor. The vivid power of imagination that is a concomitant of the artistic faculty should prove of inestimable value in ruling bodies ; the capacity to visualize the after-effects of action, to foresee the working of complex minds, to be in fact susceptible to "inspiration" and have a brain in touch with unseen influences and not limited to the stimuli of the world of matter immediately surrounding it, are essentials where the handling of a nation's welfare is concerned.

Imagination, so despised of "common sense," is at the root of every step in the evolution of the race ; clothes, houses, ships, aeroplanes, telephones, every device and invention are the children of imagination, no less than the masterpieces of a Beethoven or a Turner.

Therefore, I should say, the attributes and temperament that make for distinction in the arts are of value in whatever circumstances they are to be found, and I venture to disagree with the writer of the *History of European Morals*, when he says the potentiality for such distinction is not to be found

in the brain of a woman. Every year that gives her greater facilities for development is proving in greater degree that she can make good, and that such instances will for a long time be few and far between will prove nothing either way. Woman is hardly likely to travel the road in a year or two, which it has taken man centuries to cover.

In conceding to woman greater "nimbleness and rapidity of thought" and tact, "the power of receiving speedily and faithfully the finer inflexions of feeling," he is endowing the sex with one of the most important attributes possible in a ruler.

It is want of such qualities that has wrecked nations and communities; the wrong word spoken, an inopportune smile, and want of sympathy with other people's point of view. It is through the exercise of this intuitive gauging of "atmospheres" that a woman is able to keep all the unstable elements of a household together, to keep every one in good temper—or to reduce the evil effects of a bad one to a minimum—to manage the temperamentally opposed personalities, and variety of interests, all of which look upon her as the pivot upon which the whole structure turns. Environment has bestowed that quality on woman with lavish hand—the power to put herself in her neighbour's shoes and understand in consequence where they pinch. For one man there are twenty women at least who have it in marked degree—who have been forced to have it, through the exacting demands of self-preservation, and half the secret of bad government

has been ignorance of, or indifference to, the points that gall in the shoes of others.

Self-sacrifice, he also admits, is far less frequently found among men than among women. Here again environment has been responsible, and the instinct to sacrifice personal interests to those of others is surely a very desirable quality when adjudicating on the affairs of a people. Want of it has been conspicuous in the governments of the past, each class for itself and its own interests having been as often as not the keynote of parliaments no less than individuals.

As for the sense of duty, that imperative spur that has driven man and woman alike along the stony road of evolution, Mr. Lecky gives his verdict very uncompromisingly :—

“There are two great departments of virtue ; the impulsive, or that which springs spontaneously from the emotions ; and the deliberative, or that which is performed in obedience to the sense of duty ; and in both of these, I imagine, women are superior to men.”

If this be so, as Mr. Lecky seems to think, it may be due to the stronger appeal matter makes to man than to woman, the purely material lure in his immediate surroundings. The call of matter is less frequently sufficiently powerful to overcome a woman's sense of duty ; her contact with the less obvious side of evolution consequent upon the difference in the line of her development, is sufficiently insistent to keep its grip on her when confronted

by purely material forms of temptation. Duty has for the most part been woman's guiding star during the years that are gone, her sense of it emphasized by the conditions of her environment, and always given first place in man's conception of her. For example—should a man be run down and ask a doctor's advice, the chances are he will be told to go away for rest and change, is asked what form of amusement he likes best—shooting—hunting—golf—and advised to go away and do it, turn his back on his business, and all that business means ; whereas in the same circumstances, if a woman is told she requires rest, it is dancing, hunting, skating she is to forego—she is rarely recommended to go away and leave the children and household to look after themselves, which is the only form of rest her body really craves.

Is it that the doctor knows her sense of duty will make her stick to her post in spite of all the advice in the world ?—or is it fellow feeling for a husband who would possibly be extremely uncomfortable during her absence !

In crediting women with humility, gentleness, and modesty Mr. Lecky's map leads him perhaps a little astray. The present-day woman certainly does not suffer from a super-abundance of humility—and why should she ? In the woman of the past half of what may have appeared as such was a pose conceded to man's book of the rules. Woman has always been as conscious of her worth as man has been of his, and quite aware that to the " doormats "

of her sex might be attributed half her unremedied wrongs. Humility is a quality admirable in either sex in equal degree ; one sex has no more special cause for it than the other. Should woman be humble for no other reason than that she is a woman ? She is more likely to agree with the writer of Ecclesiasticus, who says, " Lay not thyself down for a fool to tread on " !

That they lean to mercy and men to justice is true enough, but it is a deliberate leaning, not an incapacity for impartial judgment. She would err on the side of mercy, quite alive to the fact that it is a case of erring, and between the two tendencies we should arrive at the true ideal—justice tempered by mercy. Men will always contribute a strength that springs from a virility and an abounding vitality that women cannot hope to emulate ; but it is energy of body, in energy of mind, his supremacy is open to question ; the men who worked for or against Florence Nightingale will endorse that ! It was even questioned not so long ago, when a certain hospital closed the doors of its lecture rooms to women, whether their superior energy with regard to the work did not make the pace too hot for the men, who preferred to take their studies more easily, and in doing so ran the humiliating risk of being beaten by the other sex.

Mr. Lecky claims for men the quality of self-reliance. In the struggle with matter—certainly ; but are they more self-reliant than women who have been equally obliged to fight the battles of

life? The Victorian woman had little chance of showing self-reliance in any form.

That woman has a more cramped outlook on life in general than man is undeniable, although the war has already done much to widen it, and it is essential it should be still further widened if she is to fulfil adequately her new responsibilities. The broadening influence necessary to her wider scope for action will be found in the very performance of such duties. She cannot be taught to swim before she has been in the water. Her exclusion hitherto from most fields of activity has stunted her sense of proportion, focusing her interests on the smaller details of life. It is much easier to be interested in a game you play yourself than as a mere onlooker, only half understanding its tactics and intricacies. That women have proved invaluable advisers to men filling onerous offices of state is evidence enough of the potentialities lying in an intelligent woman's brain.

CHAPTER XIX

MAN'S COMPLEMENT

That woman can excel in public speaking, and even in real oratory, has been one of the upsetting discoveries of this age. The Victorian woman was presumably dumb in the presence of any male representative, too retiring to return thanks even for a toast drunk in her honour. It was against all tradition that she should focus upon herself so much of the public attention, the limelight being essentially a perquisite of the other sex. Her views were therefore expressed vicariously by a chosen male mouthpiece, while to-day she has proved she could have done it quite as well on her own account.

Opinion nowadays goes sometimes so far as to consider women even better equipped in this respect than men, but that I think is overstating the case. Men are continually obliged to make speeches, whether their talents lie that way or not ; some positions carry with them public speaking as a necessary adjunct, while women are rarely persuaded to speak unless they know themselves to be capable of doing so. In either sex, fluency of speech and the power of lucid expression are valuable assets in public life.

But however close woman may run man in some directions, one thing is certain—wherever the struggle with matter is involved she will always turn to him and readily yield him the palm ; not as an admission of her sex's general inferiority, but of inferiority in that particular respect, the adjustment of the scale lying in her superiority in other directions. His brain, no less than his body, is tougher of texture—though not finer—than hers and he understands matter, responds to its appeal, appreciates its lure, as woman never will. His physical senses mean more to him ; matter has been more intimately his friend and his enemy all through his march towards complete self-expression. Mrs. Arthur Webster has put it aptly when she says matter *talks* to man, more than to woman.¹

Man has set his muscles to conquer the uncleared spaces of earth ; uprooted monster trees to let the sunlight in to ripen grain to his harvesting ; delving, ploughing the teeming soil to filch its treasures ; shaping forest giants into ships to bridge the seas, girdling the earth with his messengers ; fighting for his own—and to keep it when his ; claiming the air at last as spoils of his victory—turning matter the master into matter the slave. He has trained his body to obey his will, invented games—devices for the outwitting of matter—to teach his brain control of hand and

¹ *Nineteenth Century and After*, Nov., 1920. "Women and Civilization."

limb, to sharpen his powers of vision and hearing ; he has created machines out of matter, so powerful and ingenious, that once set in motion they may on occasion even prove his own destruction. It is only necessary to watch men handling guns and ships to concede to them supremacy in this direction. To see them aloft reefing sails hard as boards, while the ship rolls her yard-arm under, and the wind whips everything into demoniacal fury ; or running gun-carriages over walls and obstacles, or across bridges pieced together in inconceivably short spaces of time—to know that over the realms of matter man will always hold undisputed sway.

Woman will always regard him as a tower of strength when it comes to dealing with the material ; she need never hope to outrival him in his triumphant progress towards self-fulfilment with matter as his stepping-stone.

But has woman's fight been less strenuous because less obvious ? That is the point upon which insistence should be laid. It is always the obvious that commands attention.

While man has been engaged with the material she has found her fulcrum in the immaterial, her armoury in consequence consisting of qualities in touch with more subtle conditions than those of the matter to which man's five senses so readily respond. Her environment, I would maintain, in summing up comparative qualities, has indirectly equipped her no less well and completely than

his, an equipment equal in worth although dissimilar in detail. Her endurance is of the mind rather than of the body ; while he has worked, she has wept, and weary waiting has always required a greater patience and fortitude than any form of activity. She has been thrown back upon herself, while he has found relief in active expression. She has learnt to control her emotions through the pinpricks of everyday life—and that women have a great power of self-control no one who saw the daily trains depart for France during the late war can deny ; emotions that remain unexpressed are apt to be overlooked. Her more sensitive touch with things unseen has given her powers of intuition, a wonderful capacity for sympathy, and a comprehension of the sufferings of others, all attributes less in evidence than the physical qualities of courage and strength, so much admired in the opposite sex, but quite as indispensable in the wise administration of law and equity. That her conscientiousness in the performance of duty is superior to that of the average male is to be found even in man's imperfect maps of the unexplored country.¹

She is man's complement as man is hers—neither complete without the other, each lacking something which in the other is present, whether in the life of the home or the government of a mixed community, and equality should be the result in a far broader sense than in the individual comparison

¹ *History of European Morals.* Lecky.

of attributes similar in their essence. Upon these broad lines the comparison must always remain between a male sex with so much of the woman in it, and a female with so much of the man. Together they should make a whole as near perfection as can be hoped for in a very imperfect world, and governments have not been so impeccable or efficient in the past, that a trial of a fresh element in them should be considered unnecessary.

If straws show which way the winds blow, an indication of man's inability to regard any subject from woman's point of view is to be found in the late controversy as to whether skirts should be long or short. The male opinions, expressed with some vigour in the newspapers, have all been based entirely on a consideration of whether the limbs revealed by the short skirt be straight or crooked, thick or slim, good for the male eye to look upon or grotesque; an addition in fact to the landscape or a blot. Therefore women, not dressing so entirely with a view to pleasing the opposite sex as was at one time imagined, and weighing such advantages and disadvantages to be found in skirts either long or short, as comfort, warmth, freedom of movement, and—not having been provided with an extra arm for the purpose of holding it up out of the dirt—of cleanliness, has considered the subject from a totally different point of view.

Another odd little straw came drifting on the breeze at the commencement of the war, when

women were urged to save money by forswearing veils, gloves and chocolates. There was no suggestion put forward that men should give up collars, ties and cigarettes! A small matter, but with its humorous aspect to the sex it proposed to victimize!

There is one last attribute that in consulting man's book of the rules we find he denies to woman; and that is the sense of humour.

In the *Guide Book to Women*, by James James, although the writer credits her with many admirable points, such as having done all the dirty work, washing up, cooking, tidying up, never claiming the eight hours' limit, and tidying and washing up again, he adds:

"Woman's brain is fortunately deficient in a sense of humour. There has never been a female humorist in the world. Luckily for us; for if women had the sense of humour keenly developed—oh, wouldn't they find us funny!"

But they do find him extremely funny!—and the above remark full of unconscious humour—from a woman's point of view! And again:

"Nature has been kind in withholding the gift of humour from women. Even a rudimentary sense of humour in a wife leads straight to the Divorce Court." Mr. James is wrong. There are times to laugh, and times when it is wiser not to laugh—he will find that in the charts of which the sphinx has charge—and because woman does not laugh, it is not necessarily because she does

not want to ! Mr. James may retort that I am proving his point by taking his very amusing book seriously ! But the serious intent of some of the words spoken in jest is discernible.

The standards of humour, like those of modesty, are variable. The humour that appeals to one era may not do so to another ; it varies with nationalities no less than individuals, and often in what amuses one sex the other can see nothing to laugh at. In the drawing by the inimitable Phil May of a woman passing down a village street with her head bound up, while a group of others watch her from the pavement, we see one instance of a possibly unequal sense of humour.

“ What’s up wi’ Sal ? ” says one.

“ Ain’t yer ’eard ? ” says another. “ She’s married again.”

This may bring a smile to the lips of the outsider, but probably those women saw nothing in it at all amusing—and we may feel certain that “ Sal ” would have seen nothing to laugh at.

The sense of humour furnishes one of the most apparent instances of how mind can affect matter. Why should the sight of, say, a policeman slipping up on a wet day, and tobogganing, sitting, down the hill at Charing Cross with his helmet over his nose, cause a convulsion of the muscles and nerves of the faces of the spectators ? It is not caused purely by the passing spectacle itself ; the idea of the dignity of the law as a background has a good deal to do with the sense of amusement.

Many of the books to-day by women novelists are full of touches of humour. There are perhaps more women than men without a sense of the humorous, but that is probably for the same reason that white sheep eat more than black ones—because there are more of them. No one who has read the *Experiences of an Irish R.M.* will uphold that statement, to mention only one.

A woman's humour can be dry enough and caustic at times, especially when a bitter experience may direct it against the opposite sex. In a tram car one day, during Charlie Chaplin's visit to England, the attention of an old woman sitting opposite to me was directed to a crowd in a street in Kennington. She refused to turn round.

"Charlie Chaplin agin, I suppose," she remarked sourly, "'e's only a damfool—and I can get enough o' them at 'ome any day without wastin' me time out on the pivement!"

A sense of humour is generally developed, in company with many other attributes, through a wide familiarity with men and manners, and is a saving quality in both sexes. I fancy women are more capable of appreciating a joke against themselves than are most men, but where experience must necessarily be limited to immediate surroundings it would be a mistake to generalize on either side.

It seems a curious contradiction in nature that woman, whose functions are so largely concerned

with the form side—in contradistinction to the life side—in the reproduction of the race, should have found her line of evolution in the intangible, the formless ; that qualities of character, and ideas, should have proved the signposts along the route of her advance. Whereas man, although representing essentially the life side, should have always busied himself with forms, and found his main stepping-stones in the outward and apparent—in the visible matter that makes so strong an appeal to his senses. It may be in obedience to the universal law of compensation, so adjusting the contradictory tendencies, that neither should preponderate over the other.

Therefore man, with his life-giving potentialities, never loses the close touch with matter that will always keep barbarism—primitive conditions—close at his heels ; while woman, dealing mainly with form in the task of reproducing the race, turns her back on conditions dependent on matter, at the first opportunity, and strains after such things of the spirit as beauty, refinement, love of flowers, exquisite scents, and textures smooth and delicate to the touch.

Mrs. Webster, in putting forward this tendency in woman, quotes Defoe as having realized her potentialities in this respect so long ago as 1698.

“ I cannot think,” he says, “ that God Almighty made them so delicate, so glorious creatures, and furnished them with such charms, so agreeable and delightful to mankind, with souls so capable

of the same accomplishments with men, and all to be only stewards of our Houses, Cooks and Slaves."

Man, however little it may come to the surface, never quite loses this touch with matter; the primitive impulse to kill bubbles up at the mere suggestion of a possible quarry. He longs to show his domination over the material, even if destruction should be a concomitant factor; yet his particular function is to carry on the *life* side of creation—and woman, although having entire charge of the form side, cares comparatively little for such things in her heart, but responds instinctively to the lure of the spirit.

One of nature's paradoxes, perhaps, for man's unravelling.

The results of the equality for which woman asks should be to the advantage of the world—equality in opportunity for expression and justice in legislation. A race of which the larger portion is kept in bondage must necessarily be crippled in its progress towards full development, and no one with an elementary comprehension of the meaning of freedom can maintain that hitherto women have been free. Now that his eyes are opening, man will realize that instead of respecting and making allowance for the physical disabilities imposed by nature upon woman, he has added to them limitations which nature did not impose; he ignored the fact that she was entitled to arrange her own affairs, learning her lessons through her

own mistakes and failures, and that he had no right to interfere with what concerned her evolution as an individual.

As her limitations have been mainly due to an enforced and unnatural environment the remedy obviously lies in its removal, towards which the first steps have been taken. Man surely need not be afraid of the results.

When women attain real freedom of thought and action, and have the opportunity to follow a natural bent, fostered and encouraged by circumstances, instead of in spite of them, he will find that many of the characteristics in the sex of which he has so bitterly complained were of his own making; that in the much-to-be-deplored complications so disturbing to domestic life he has been hoist by his own petard; and that in allowing woman to order her own life, far from casting a shadow over his, many of the clouds that appeared so inevitable to intercourse between the sexes will melt away. Already in the independent womanhood of to-day the old parasitical instincts are dying, and with them many of the ignoble methods inseparable from such conditions.

True reform, if it is to last, must come from the heart. It was futile to talk of self-respect, to adorn copy-books with pretty phrases concerning it, or to reproach woman with the want of it, while the most illiterate male in England was considered more worthy of a vote in the government than herself. Self-respect is born of a sense of respon-

sibility, of a something to live up to, and in the fresh fields thrown open to her she will find what the years of dependence and subjection denied her. The remedy will be automatic. The result will be seen in the abandonment of the narrower and less straightforward means to ends, which the old environment forced upon her; all of which will be as much to man's advantage as to her own.

The new privileges accorded to women in England, carrying with them so much of vital importance to the sex, is not a breaking up of new soil. The experiment, first tried, then crystallized into established conditions, has already proved a success in other countries; in several of the American States, in New Zealand, in parts of Australia and in Finland—the latter was the first country to enfranchise the sex. It may serve possibly as a valuable international bond, for the highly-educated women of all countries will stand loyally together in the face of their common enemy—subjection. It is not only in this country they have learnt through a wider experience and knowledge of the facts of life that half their ills and sufferings have root in the accepted tradition of their inferiority.

It should be in itself an illuminative fact that the members of the sex who have cried loudest and striven most persistently for equality have not been the frivolous or half-educated crying as children might for the moon; on the contrary, it was mostly among such the anti-suffragists were to be found. The woman doctors, reformers,

with one or two exceptions the women who had proved their worth in the world of literature, and especially the workers among the poorer classes have all ranged themselves on the side of equality between the sexes. Woman with all her faults has admittedly been a civilizing and humanizing influence in the life of a nation, no less than in the private life of an individual ; why should not this influence be apparent in public life ? There is no getting over the world-old sex instinct that will drive man to put his best side forward in her presence and to restrain the less worthy impulses of his nature, which is in itself a wholesome stimulus towards the final suppression of the latter. Man in an Eveless Eden deteriorates in certain directions, and is inclined to return to the barbarism whence he sprang in the absence of that powerful incentive—the desire to shine in the presence of woman. He has even excluded her from his clubs on the plea—among others—that the continued strain of living up to the standards demanded by civilized life in her presence is irksome ! The very bargees—a much-maligned race !—try to moderate their language when they know a lady is within hearing.

The main object of a true civilization is to develop the strength of the will until it can keep under control the impulses implanted by nature ; to merge the good of the individual in the good of the community. Nature in the raw says kill off the weak, preaches the survival of the fittest,

and flings her worn-out instruments on the dust-heap. Civilization holds out a hand to lame dogs, respects the rights of minorities, and abstains from riding roughshod over the feelings of others, even to its own disadvantage; replaces, in fact, the standard of egotism with that of altruism.

To-day it is a sign of degeneracy in man, when by right of his superior physical strength he proclaims the inferiority of women¹; it is one of the symptoms of the backward glance towards barbarism that follows in the wake of every great war. It has lately been apparent in Russia, and some other European countries, and Englishmen may be congratulated for having publicly dissociated themselves from the degenerate impulse by the enfranchisement of their fellow-countrywomen at so crucial an epoch in the history of nations.

It is for the women to see that they never regret it.

For with her new power in the electorate she can become an instrument for evil no less than for good; more by reason of her inexperience than deliberate sinning. In the exercise of that power—until she has become more accustomed to the feel of the reins of government in her hands—she should proceed with a greater caution than in the first flush of her newly liberated enthusiasms might appear necessary. Men, who have been playing at the game since governments began, have a more

¹ *History of European Morals.* Lecky.

intimate knowledge of its moves, and their results, and a wider experience of an intriguing world and its ways; unless the novices at the game exercise caution, and are careful not to enter doors blindly merely because they are held invitingly open, they may well find themselves the tools of some of the community who must be considered the enemies of law and order.

There are many apostles about, preaching insidious gospels, and women with their eager desire to right wrongs may well be caught in the web of plausible moral and political tricksters. The feminist bodies and societies should walk warily, with their eyes wide open, their good sense restraining emotional weaknesses liable to upset the power of unbiased judgment, or they may find themselves in toils from which disentanglement may prove a difficult task. They should be careful never to become involved in any form of united action, all the intricacies and probable results of which they do not thoroughly understand.

No form of government will be perfect until both men and women act up to the highest that is in them—a Utopian ideal perhaps, but no more than should be expected from those of a civilized community who undertake the responsibilities of governing their fellow-creatures. If, as man himself has conceded, a conscientious performance of duty be essentially one of woman's characteristics, in greater degree than in his own sex, the advantages of an admixture of her influence in

national and civil affairs present a point too obvious to require pressing. That her weaknesses and shortcomings are in many instances due to an environment calculated to repress her potentialities, rather than encourage them, in itself suggests the remedy; and those inherent disabilities, irremediable because imposed by nature, physically and physiologically, will be counterbalanced by the intuitional gifts and power of sympathy and imagination with which men are not so well endowed. Her place in the universe and in governments is not to augment the sum of masculine attributes, but to supplement them. There is no more grotesque freak than an aggressively masculine woman, except an effeminate man; the former can be remedied, because it is generally a pose; the latter is one of nature's mistakes.

That optimistic views of the enfranchisement of women and the probable results of equal legislation are held impartially by both sexes, the following passages will show. The first is a frank statement of Mr. W. Lyon Blease's own opinion, written some years before the cause of woman's suffrage was won in England.

"Upon the enfranchisement of women will follow all the advantages which have followed upon the enfranchisement of men, including an increase of responsibility, a quickened sense of public duty, and a strengthening of the feminine mind and character.

"The improvement will not be confined to public

matters. The increasing worth and importance of women in the State will gradually remove their inferiority from the national aggregate of thought . . . ” in other words the cloud of suggestion already alluded to. “ Greater dignity and responsibility on the one hand will be balanced by greater respect and greater understanding on the other. The toleration of sexual vice in men will decrease as men come to recognize the rights of women as equal to their own. The same growth of consideration will take place in the relations of husbands and wives. Wives will no longer be required to check the working of their own intellects in order to avoid a conflict of opinion with their husbands. Husbands will cease to regard wives as mere appendages to themselves. . . . Natural differences will always remain. But within the whole vast field which is common to both sexes, there will prevail a more lofty ideal, and a more genuine recognition of the common interest of both men and women.” ¹

In 1893, women in the State of Colorado were given the vote, and Helen Summers in dealing with the results in that country is quoted by Mr. Blease as follows :

“ Equal suffrage has brought, then, practically no loss, and some decided gain, the latter mainly evident in the effect of the possession of the ballot upon women. It has enlarged their interests, quickened their civic consciousness, and developed

¹ *Emancipation of English Women.* W. L. Blease.

in many cases ability of a high order which has been of service to the city, the country, and the State. Closely allied to this wider outlook . . . is the development of the spirit of comradeship between the sexes. . . . Equal suffrage is a step in the direction of better citizenship, a more effective use of the ability of women as an integral part of the race, and a closer understanding and comradeship between men and women.”¹

Here we have first the opinion of a man, predicting some of the results of the inclusion of women in the electorate, before it become a fact; and of a woman, showing the results which have actually followed female enfranchisement in a country where it has been established for a sufficiently long period to prove them, and where women entrusted with a share in the government have not proved wanting.

¹ *Equal Suffrage* (1910). Helen Summers.

CHAPTER XX

WOMAN'S DEBT TO MAN

The working of a woman's mind has so far been occupying our attention, with her views on the problems of life, and the inevitable effect of environment on her development, an environment it would seem to have been specially devised by man to nullify any attempts she might make towards her own freedom.

But there is another side to the shield. Man's debt to woman during the long centuries of ministry to his comfort, self-sacrifice that he might go forward, her own interests sunk in his, is great; it is equally necessary to consider—what is woman's debt to man?

It may be objected that in this discussion this debt on woman's side is being tardily recognized, but it must be remembered that it is her point of view we set out to consider. Her debt to him in the past has for the most part been duly insisted on; his debt to her hitherto never quite sufficiently considered.

In the old primitive world, when the race was just beginning to feel its feet and man was aware only of the body and its needs, he hunted for her,

fought for her, and sheltered her from storm and sun. He suffered discomforts of heat and cold that she might be at ease and warm ; he kept the wolf from the door—literally, in those primeval forests, as well as metaphorically ; he risked his life among the beasts of the jungle that she might be fed, and defended her and her children from the predatory instincts of his neighbours. The hunting doubtless was not wholly uncongenial to him ! but whether it afforded him pleasure or otherwise in the doing, woman reaped the benefit and owes him a proportionate gratitude. With Might acknowledged the supreme ruler she was but a shuttlecock, and the whole edifice of domestic life without his muscle and sinew to support it would have inevitably collapsed at the first onslaught.

Husbands in those days were no doubt chosen for their size and valour—or prized, would perhaps be the better word, as woman's choice had little to do with it. That women prefer a "masterful" man is a fable descended from those primeval conditions of barbarism. She certainly admires strength in the opposite sex, of both mind and body, but as the "masterful" man merely means one who is determined to get his own way no matter at what cost to others, a week of him as a husband is about as much as any ordinary woman wants nowadays.

With all codes of ethics still in the melting-pot, man struggling tooth and nail for sheer existence, his mentality just a little in advance of the animals, woman regarded in the light of fighter, and food-

provider—the two main issues of life—or in dealing with matter in any form beyond cooking it, was obviously his inferior; her physical disabilities were in evidence, and any latent qualities of a more subtle description were at a discount. Physical advantages were the only things that counted at all. Her line of evolution was already taken as a matter of course; she was learning to care intelligently for children, to nurse the man when he was sick, and to attend in every way to his welfare and comfort—all accomplishments as valuable to humanity in their way as hunting and fighting. Her uses in the universe were less obvious, and therefore less noticed than his; he quite naturally labelled her his inferior, and the tradition—apparently true enough at the start—came into being that was to mould the accepted opinion of the generations in front of them.

It was a man's world; he could deal with it far more satisfactorily than woman, unhampered as he was by any scruples about right or wrong outside the jurisdiction of his strong right arm.

Whether he did woman a good turn in shouldering so completely the active calls of existence may be open to question. The physical development of the modern young woman points to potentialities in the sex nipped possibly in the bud by a life from which physical exertion was so largely eliminated.

But in his defence of her, and care for her, primeval woman owed him everything; often her very existence. Individually, man at his best has

always been her best friend; it is collectively he has proved otherwise, uniting against her in a common cause, and crippling thereby the development of her individuality—no doubt instigated at intervals by spasms of the same sort of panic which later on attacked the Princes of Persia.

As time went on and defence of the homestead was still more than a mere phrase, and codes for the guidance of conduct began to be formed, he took upon himself as a point of honour the duty of protecting her in and from all threatening circumstances, at the risk of his own safety, or even of his life. This self-imposed obligation became the central jewel in the crown of his manhood—the consideration of the strong for the weak. He has acted up to it conscientiously ever since, earning contumely and ostracism from his fellow-men whenever he has fallen short of its ideals.

The whole romanticism of the Middle Ages was founded on this code of man's first duty to woman. To rescue damsels in distress was the dream of every budding Sir Galahad, the theme of troubadours, the one end that justified any means. To put his muscles and sinews at her command was his great desire, actuated not only by vanity, but by the real chivalry of doing her a service. He very soon learnt to realize the call in him was something beyond a surface explanation—something that could not be put into words—something that had its origin outside matter.

There was a picture painted once—indicating

the first dawnings of the higher calls in man—a horde of semi-barbarians kept at bay by a single woman standing on the steps of a cathedral, with a cross in her hand; and the barbarians were not Christians—but the woman stood for something, and the god in them responded to it.

Through all the ups and downs of civilizations, that attitude of man towards woman has never failed. Individuals have of course failed to uphold it, many a time, but there are delinquents in every fold. Time has only served to establish that particular point of honour still more firmly on its feet, no specious casuistry of any century has served to uproot it. All through the past to the day in which we now live, history teems with occasions great and small on which man has proved faithful to the responsibilities his superior physical strength imposes upon him, and there is no more moving incident in history, nor any that should stir into greater activity the gratitude and admiration of women, than the story of the loss of the *Birkenhead*, one only among countless examples of the same sort, recorded and unrecorded.

When the troopship *Birkenhead* struck a reef off Cape Agulhas in 1852, her commander Captain Salmond's first thought was of the women and children. The total loss of the ship was inevitable, and he ordered the master's assistant to reserve the second cutter for them alone. Colonel Seton, in command of the troops on board, drew his sword and stood by the gangway to prevent the

men if necessary from crowding into the boat.

The necessity never arose.

When the women and children were in the boat, she was pushed off and stood by, about 150 yards from the ship.

The *Birkenhead* immediately began to break up, and it was not possible to lower any of the other boats except three small ones. The men were drawn up on the poop and remained there—some of them mere boys—without a murmur. Those who could swim were then told to save themselves and a voice cried, "Make for the boats!" but Captain Salmond implored them not to do so, appealing to them not to risk swamping the boat containing the women and children. It is recorded that only three men fell out!

The officers shook hands, and the rest waited in perfect order, and, a few moments later, went down with the ship.

That the sea was swarming with sharks is an added tribute to their courage.

The official report said:—

"Colonel Seton issued his commands with as much coolness and presence of mind as if he had been on parade.

"Every one did as he was directed.

"All received their orders and had them carried out as if the men were embarking instead of going to the bottom. There was only this difference—that I never saw any embarkation conducted with so little noise or confusion."¹

¹ *The Story of the Sea.* Edited by "Q."

Let any woman inclined to wage sex-war remember that story of cold-blooded heroism on behalf of her sex—and pause.

This is only one story among a multitude. Similar incidents of men giving their lives for women—for woman in the abstract—could be quoted by the score ; at sea, on land, in the Indian Mutiny, in public or in private life, whenever her safety is at stake he has thrown himself into the breach. All ranks—soldiers and sailors—men of any or all denominations, or of none, if he be a man, to be considered by men worthy of the name, have placed their physical strength and aptitude for dealing with matter at the service of any woman in need of it—which should always be gratefully remembered when accounts are squared between the sexes.

Even in the withholding from her rights and privileges as an individual member of the State, this protective instinct must be recognized as a factor. In her dependence he found the opportunity for the display of his own prowess which probably urged him almost unconsciously to favour the conditions that provided it. The decree that to him always she should owe her living, was but an echo from the cave-man's code, when, owing to conditions then ruling, the hunting was exclusively his. The instinct once become deeply rooted, he forgot that such conditions lead to slavery, and that it is part of the office of civilization to equalize uneven balances ; to give the weak,

through the training of brain and hand, as good a chance as the strong, and to recognize, as admirable, qualities that in the days of barbarism were held of no account; to remember that the civilization that had lifted him from the level of the hewers of wood and drawers of water should be allowed to do as much for the other sex. He did not realize that, when no longer demanded by the exigencies of half-wild existence, his sense of protection, although springing from the nobler side of his nature, might stultify or delay woman's own evolution by turning her into a helpless parasite.

The code that has made him work for her, die for her, risk life and person, take her burdens on his shoulders, and even lie for her, is a magnificent one, and should temper all her criticism when considering sex questions. True chivalry—the consideration of the physically strong for the weak, has in it something so akin to the Divine, that its manifestation can never fail to appeal to the best in man and woman alike. But a chivalry that demands its reward, that exacts from woman an admission of her inferiority as a sex, is a poor shadow of the real thing.

Men sometimes protest—that woman cannot expect to have it both ways. What exactly do they mean?

So long as women are under their present physical disabilities they can never have it both ways. That would surely mean, to enjoy a physical strength equal to man's, and yet expect his consideration?

When a woman resigns her seat to a member of the opposite sex who may be crippled or maimed or old, she is not necessarily implying inferiority in the object of her attentions, nor does he imagine inferiority is to be inferred by its acceptance.

And women, no less than men, have their codes in which chivalry has its part. There is probably hardly a wife in England who is not aware of the particular spot in a husband's armour where a sting deftly implanted will penetrate the defences of his vanity, or irritate him beyond his limits of self-control.

She is well aware how serviceable a tongue may be, the weapon that has been one of her chief lines of defence, that has so often, backed by a nimble wit, stood her in good stead and that can madden a man into desperate acts and childish tempers; and the evolved woman, the woman who thinks, who tries to live up to ideals, refrains from planting the sting, well knowing her powers to hurt. She scorns to use such methods; as she should scorn to strike a man who cannot retaliate, whose hands are bound in the presence of physical weakness with bonds far more inviolable than are her own by nature's disabilities. There are black sheep in both sexes, many of them, but we regard their standards as relics of the barbarism from which as a race we are trying to escape.

The Victorian woman, through man's protective instincts, suffered many minor limitations besides those that really mattered—among them was an

absence of the bump of locality; she had no flair for finding her way about alone, for the excellent reason that she was never allowed to attempt it. Even in the most harmless districts, women when they rode or walked abroad were accompanied by either a servant or a male relative. Naturally, with the responsibility of finding the best and shortest route off her shoulders, she paid little heed to turns and cross-roads, landmarks or the names of streets, and man looked upon her topographical ignorance with amused indulgence as another idiosyncrasy of the sex.

But once she found her voice and began to protest, and he saw that she was claiming the right in earnest to find her own way about in the world without a footman behind her and a male relation at her side, refusing in fact to have her wings clipped any longer, he set to work to make it a better and safer world for her to find her way about in. He set a higher standard for the manners and habits of his own sex, without which any real independence of movement for women would have been impossible; he swept and garnished the secret places of his mind, ousting unclean suspicions, and purifying his outlook on life, and whereas the Victorian woman could never hope to walk the streets alone unmolested—even to drive in a hansom cab was to “ask for trouble”—the woman of this century can walk about unaccompanied at any hour of the day, and almost of the night, with an impunity that leaves no after-thought in either sex.

Man has done that for her, and in like directions her influence will always count for good.

If by living up to her ideals, and striving to right wrongs, she shows him she wants a still better and cleaner world to live in, he will see that she gets it. Of that I am convinced.

His great mistake has been in refusing to recognize that her craving for expression can be just as strong and compelling as his own ; that dynamic forces of any sort or kind cannot be annihilated, can only be deflected and transmuted, and that woman's nature cries as imperatively for self-expression as man's. He has been haunted by the bogey of an emancipation that he fancies might interfere with his own privileges and tend to diminish his own comfort ; whereas woman in the wish to assume new duties has never for one moment contemplated shirking the old. He has irritated her by his assumption of control over matters involving her sex no less than his, and in some cases her sex alone, and in ignoring her right to express an opinion has often done more harm than good ; with the best intentions his ignorance of the psychology of her sex has led him into bypaths leading to nowhere. There are men still apt to regard women who ask for rights as hyenas—though nowadays, with hardly any petticoats ! Take, as an instance of his curious misapprehension of the working of her mind, the question of the birth-rate.

Periodically a diminishing birth-rate causes a

flutter of anxiety in the male mind and he sets to work to find a remedy. There are a dozen hypothetical reasons suggested for the decrease, and women read and listen to exhortations from Ministers and Presidents to remedy the state of affairs by having large families. But such exhortations should not come from men, who are exempt from the trials and suffering of child-bearing; to have any effect they should come from a woman, with half a dozen children of her own, and who understands what she is talking about—and other women know it. Coming from a man, she is either irritated, or smiles sphinx-like and passes on.

As well sit comfortably in an office and exhort sailors to face a dangerous sea! And he crowns his mistake, by expecting to encourage large families by remitting a part of the man's income tax! He is bribing the wrong partner! He should also know, that if a woman's fancy should lie in the direction of a large family, she will have it—without any exhortation from statesmen; and that if it does not lie that way, the remission of part of her husband's income tax will leave her quite unmoved!

But the old, played-out prejudices are passing, and the further behind we leave the war, with its reaction of a return towards the barbarism that exploits the animal side of humanity rather than the spiritual, the more willing men will be to acknowledge woman's claims as a citizen beyond the utilitarian aspect of wife and mother. Once his

eyes are wide open, he is of much too fine a nature to exact an admission of sex-inferiority as the price of his chivalry ; he is too just to withhold from woman privileges and opportunities which work for her welfare equally with his own. If civilization be permitted to run its course, free of the disintegrating convulsions of the last decade, woman, in her efforts to evolve the powers within her, need not be afraid of man ; nor need man fear the woman, of the future. They may venture to agree with Mr. W. L. Blease when he says : “ I have seen something of the new women and I am not afraid.” ¹

Her victories will be won through her appeal to his higher nature, rather than the lower. The old ignoble methods are already on the road to oblivion. It was not through the seductions of Delilah the courtesan that the Suffrage has been won, but the persuasions of woman—standing out in the open, looking man straight in the face, appealing to his sense of justice and good comradeship. It was to his magnanimity, his balanced judgment, his generosity, and again the protective instinct which would give her everything she wants, her last appeal has been made, and to which all that is fine in him has responded.

Women in their struggle for freedom are apt to forget sometimes how much man has done for them in the past. Custom has familiarized the passing show of generations of men who—over and above

¹ *Emancipation of English Women.* Introduction.

the necessity for earning a living for themselves—have incurred further risks and liabilities for the sake of wife and family dependent upon them ; risks to life and limb at sea ; risks to health in leading sedentary, unnatural lives in offices ; the strain of uncongenial work that must not be relinquished in case no other should turn up ; the effort added to an already strenuous task in order to provide the summer holiday—and all taken as a matter of course, with no occasion for heroics. Such debts must not be forgotten when women attain to the full measure of their freedom. That part of man's code, although incidentally making a parasite of woman through his inability to see her point of view, found its source in the higher springs of his nature.

Civilization gives to man a respect for the higher qualities, for the less obvious, than brute courage and physical endurance, and therefore a truer appreciation of the part woman plays and has played in evolution. It tells him to control emotions, where indulgence will militate against the well-being of his neighbour ; to treat those physically weaker than himself—including the animal world—with chivalrous forbearance ; to acknowledge the obligations imposed by education and success in life, and to respect the rights of minorities. It calls upon the animal to give place to the Divine impulse within him, and it is to the latter, rather than the former, that the women of the future will make an unfailing appeal.

For it is through man's higher nature that the Suffrage battle has been won. Women never have won, and never can win, anything by force of arms ; the world of matter is man's battlefield, not woman's with her physical and physiological disabilities. But there are other battlefields besides those of the material, and on those levels woman is as good a fighter, and is as well or better equipped than the male of her species. The fight of the militant suffragettes was a sham fight. All honour to them for their courage, sufferings, and self-sacrifice—whatever opinion may be held of their methods ; but had it not been for man's code of ethics he could have swept them off the face of the earth ; honour tied his hands. By pure force of arms, woman would never have won the battle.

But through her persistence, the male mind understood at last she was in earnest. She forced him to look at the question from her point of view, to brush it aside no longer, as unimportant to the country's good ; to weigh it, analyse its probable results, and survey the ground upon which she based her claims for equality. Man must surely acknowledge that the fighting spirit the "non-combatant" sex proved themselves possessed of, would be a valuable addition to his own forces in political warfare.

When her activities in this direction were brought to a sudden cessation by the war, she proceeded to prove her value as an individual and a citizen, and through the consequent appeal to that higher

side of him that has been fully awakened through the advance of his evolution, one of the most important revolutions possible in the history of a country took place, and woman got her vote.

But in this world of matter she must always acknowledge she owes her privileges and freedom to man's higher self. The slightest hint of a return to barbarism would instantly relegate her to the old level, to the bondage that limited her capacities, and stunted the growth of her soul, when, protest as she may, she would again find herself kicking helplessly against the prick she knows so well. It certainly would not be justifiable since man has eaten of the tree of knowledge and knows the meaning of justice and equity. But it would be fact.

So long as physical inequality remains incidental to the bodies of the human race, the ultimate appeal must be to force unless reason and the Divine within him stay man's hand. Therefore, for a civilization which means so much more to her than to him, and which he has done his share in bringing about, she should be eternally grateful. With the awareness of his own strength of muscle and limb in the background of his mind, inevitably colouring his views on creation, a very strong effort must be necessary to keep his primitive instincts in a subordinate position and impose upon them the nobler qualities of his sense of justice, and the recognition of the rights of others.

The young generation of to-day are growing up

under the influence of a different order of " suggestion " ; ignorance and incapacity in women no longer calls for admiration. Parasitical tendencies are looked upon with disfavour by both sexes. The modern young man admires efficiency and capability in the sex of which the old tradition was " to prefer them clinging " !

The ivy and the oak phantasy, upon which so much hinged in man's book of the rules, is for ever discredited ; instead of the ivy which was apt to be stifling and stultifying in its effects, the oak turns now to find a young sapling poised firmly on its own roots, and laughing eyes assuring him he did not really prefer them " clinging " after all.

Help mutually invoked is a different matter, and no one is free of the universal law of interdependence.

The amazing thing is, that man with all his chivalry, all his generosity and instinct of protectiveness, should have made and upheld laws for centuries that placed woman body and soul, by depriving her of any sort of independence, entirely at the mercy of any ruffian into whose hands she might have been unfortunate enough to place her life and happiness !

CHAPTER XXI

A WARNING—AND A RECONCILIATION

In any reaction there is a danger of the pendulum swinging too far in the opposite direction ; but it is a danger that with a little forethought generally can be averted. Knowledge is power, by whomsoever possessed, and the woman of the future will do well to remember it can be a power for evil no less than for good.

She should remember, too, that the battle is only half won and it still behoves her to tread warily. Her demands have been no more than legitimate. Equality of opportunity for self-development and self-expression is what she asks, including equality and justice in legislation. She asks man to give her a helping hand forward ; not to hold her up to contumely and ridicule when in the first flush of new responsibilities she makes mistakes. That she is his equal in capacity for government has still to be proved, and only she and time can prove it. With the Suffrage only a few years old it is impossible yet to come to any valuable conclusions.

If, as I have tried to demonstrate, environment has been responsible for some of her shortcomings, the remedy is obvious ; if these disabilities are inherent, other qualities also inherent in woman,

and apparently lacking in man, should make the balance even. That she is perfectly capable—more capable in fact than man—of dealing with questions in which her own sex is concerned, is certain, and there are not many questions of any moment that do not concern both sexes equally.

Much has been entrusted to her by the Creator of the evolutionary processes, and much has been expected of her; with the new responsibilities more still will be required when she renders up her account. In her lies the chief link between the world of matter and the world that lies behind, between the seen and the unseen, and if the rank materialist should object that the fact of any unseen has yet to be proven, I can only say that to trace back from effect to cause is legitimate argument and that no one to-day will deny that when woman's standards of morality drop to low levels, the general standard follows suit. It has been said that the standard of a woman's morality is the measure of a nation's strength, and that does not necessarily narrow the limits of that morality to the radius of her duties of wife and mother. She can make a stronger appeal to man's higher nature than any other form of stimulus, no less than to his lower, and without the surpassing love and tenderness of which the best—and even the worst—of her sex are capable, to leaven a world so very definitely centred in matter and material issues, he would have remained very much more akin to his barbarian ancestors than he may suppose.

As a provocative force towards the presentment of his better qualities, when he wishes to win her admiration and respect, and as an appeal to his protective instincts—to the chivalry latent in his soul, she calls to the best that is in him ; while through her own more delicately constituted brain and nervous system she is in touch with influences manifesting themselves in her intuition and ready sympathy, making her the most potent factor for civilization, in its eternal war with the barbarism whose kingdom is matter.

There will always be women unworthy of the privileges conceded to them, indifferent to the fine purposes of life ; and there will always be men unfortunate enough to have had intercourse with none of the higher levels of womanhood, who will judge the sex by their own experiences. The pleasure-seeker and the vampire who imagine that in haunting night clubs and throwing decency of mind and body to the winds, they are " seeing life " and leading their generation, are in fact far behind it, as are the vapid, frivolous, although possibly harmless butterflies, who think of nothing but amusing themselves and " having a good time."

But their standards are not to be upheld as those of womanhood, any more than the bar-frequenters and general wastrels of the opposite sex should be quoted as leaders of men. So far from leading her sex or of being in the forefront of an unfolding world—as she would claim, by reason of her unbridled conduct and experience with others of

the same inclinations—the night club haunter or empty-headed child of pleasure is a relic of a primitive world, and of the Victorian days in which the parasitical tendency became so largely developed.

Judge Parry, with the wide experience that must have been his in dealing with all types, drawing comparisons between the women of this century and of the last, said publicly not long ago :

“ When my Victorian contemporaries call upon me to uphold the splendid traditions of our day I hold my peace. For I cannot honestly support them, and in my humble opinion the education, business training, and wholesome sport of the modern young woman of middle class and upper class families is a far better career for a girl than the old, idle shop-gazing, visiting, aimless existence of the butterfly worshippers of the Victorian “ oof ” bird.”

Surely that opinion from one who is not only a member of the sex that for so long kept woman ignorant and within such narrow limits, but who has reached his present position through the fine quality of his judgment and power of analysis, speaks well for the woman of the future ?

The primary desire of women now must be to face their new responsibilities with the earnest desire to prove worthy of them, and a word of warning—given in all humility—may not be out of place.

Firstly, they should endeavour to look upon their newly attained privileges not from a narrow

or personal point of view, not as the spoils of a victory over the other sex, or an opportunity for achieving their own ends, nor even putting undue weight on the dignity added to their status as units in a community. Both enfranchisement and the equality in legislation that must eventually be established, should be regarded from the broader and more altruistic standpoint, as an opening for playing a useful part in citizenship and for the benefit of humanity at large. The exercise of such responsible duties will incidentally widen their own views on men and matters, and in enabling them through education and freedom of action to put their side forward of questions relating to their sex, men will find an increase of understanding that will be no less beneficial to themselves.

To women I would earnestly say—do not go into Parliament thinking only of your own point of view, or that of your own sex exclusively!

That has been the mischief in Parliaments for all time. Personal interests, whether of capital or labour, vested interests, whether for the country's good or not, have always been the stumbling-blocks in the way of an ideal government. Let the new members of the Electorate, whether in Parliament or in registering votes, think of other interests beyond those exclusively feminine. Otherwise there will be established only a centralized battlefield for an everlasting sex war, and woman will have done nothing to raise the level of practical politics.

Woman, with a little more patience, having gained the right to make herself heard and felt, will get all she wants without trying to ignore or sweep aside the claims of others. Her past environment has given her a facility for trying on her neighbours' shoes ; let her look at affairs from man's point of view as well as her own, and in meeting him half-way she will find that, owing to his sense of justice and reasonableness, he will not ask her to come further.

Woman must, in the years of probation to come, be true to herself. In her new freedom posing of all kinds should be relegated to past days when her environment made it one of the most effective weapons in her armoury. Vapours and faintings were not, even in their own day, half so attractive as man led woman to suppose. Even in the catching of a husband such traps could easily be overdone ; to hold a softly delicate hand, and whisper reassuring words into a shell-like ear, was all very well in the object of a passing fancy, but nobody wanted them in a wife. And it was all a pose.

Within my own experience a *débutante* of the last century, on returning from her first ball, was heard to murmur, " Mamma, do you think I overdid the innocent ? "

Woman at heart was as capable and reasonable then as she is showing herself to be now. With a natural and congenial outlet for the energies that have been allowed to run to waste for so long, there will be no longer any excuse for the faults

and deficiencies of the deplorable conditions of the past ; no longer will she be thrown back on herself to eat her heart out for she hardly knows what.

Some of the more intuitive among doctors had already divined the mischief in a few isolated cases, detecting the inner fires smouldering sullenly because the bright flame of them could find no outlet, and were destroying both body and soul until accident or comprehension gave them the chance they craved. The world must be a better world, with woman standing out in the open, looking it in the face, scorning the petty methods and ignoble deceptions inevitable to a state of bondage, to whichever sex the victims of it may belong. Equality as the basis of self-respect, will be in itself the remedy for much of the caprice and limitation of outlook which might have been supposed to interfere with woman's capacity for governing.

That the man of to-day is becoming reconciled to the advancement in the status of the opposite sex, and is recognizing the wide range of her capabilities, can be read in the following opinion, recently published in reference to the claims of Peeresses to a seat in the House of Lords : " Every one whose intelligence is unhampered by prejudice and ultra-conservative conventions hopes that the petition may be successful and that Lady Rhondda may take her seat as a Peeress in her own right in triumph ! "—*Daily Mail*, May 18.¹

¹ Lady Rhondda's claim has since been rejected.

After all, we are intended to fight our disabilities, even those of nature's making and for which environment is not wholly responsible, and woman will no doubt transcend many of even her physical disqualifications in the future if the incentive be sufficiently strong; and in doing so will still keep to her own particular line of evolution, as man has kept to his. He fought his natural disabilities with regard to speed and distance when he called matter to his aid, invented wheels and harnessed the forces for locomotion. Woman, with the incentives now within her grasp, will become a more physically sound and healthy creature, and many disqualifying elements will disappear under the influence of a new suggestion operating on her mind and on the minds of those around her. She will *desire* to be well and physically fit, in order to take her share of responsibility and keep up with the march of affairs. Lack of interest in life has been one of the sources of evil.

It has always been so. The war proved it, if it had not been proved before. Apart from the potent note of a new suggestion around her, the desire within will goad her into throwing off many of the neurotic, emotional forms of ailment which are so often quoted as militating against her capacity for public service, and which as often as not have their root in too little to do.

Woman's environment and its exactions have taught her the greatest thing in the world—that there is a greater joy in giving than in getting;

that in all the things of the spirit, transcending matter, in love and sacrifice, to give is the more blessed part—and may she never forget it! But men should remember it must be a free gift, that gift of service which she has lavished with both hands whenever called upon, and not extorted by the doctrine of her inferiority and unequal legislation. It is to be hoped she will never go back on the traditions of the past, nor forsake the principles of self-sacrifice and service for others which has become bone of her bone.

But what environment has given environment can take away—and environment meaning the state of life in which it has pleased God to place us there is no disrespect in the paraphrase—and it is conceivable that the qualities acquired through, and transmitted by, a difficult and disciplinary scheme of life may tend to atrophy and finally disappear in conditions of a less chastening nature.

In sharing with woman privileges and rights hitherto reserved exclusively for his own benefit, man will inevitably become less self-centred and more intuitively thoughtful for others, for in conceding to her a place in the sun he may sometimes find himself obliged to put up with the shade. In the enjoyment of her new opportunities for self-expression it would certainly be possible for woman to drift into the line of least resistance, to which all human nature is so prone, and in the softer, more enervating conditions lose her instinct for unselfish love, for self-sacrifice, for disinterested

service, and her power of sympathy and adaptability, which have been her great assets in the past, and which should be her invaluable contribution to the governments of the future.

There is a "mother" quality in the love of most women that, coming from the hearts of the ruling body, should find its reaction in the heart of the nation; an all-embracing love that makes a woman long to draw the whole world of striving, perplexed, labouring humanity into her arms, and shield them from all want and evil; that gives her an instinctive sympathy for all, young or old, who are struggling to earn a living and putting up a fight against circumstances that any moment may prove too much for them. Most thoughtful women are conscious of the yearning at times. It is of supreme importance that a less limiting environment may not result in the loss of the qualities induced by those bygone limitations; it would be indeed disastrous if in the sunshine of better days women were to lose the finer attributes of character acquired through the years of stress and storm. Above all, let her remember she is where she is through the generosity that has never been wanting in the majority of men as individuals, and that all further benefits and extension of civic privilege, be her claims just or unjust, she will owe no less to that fine strain in his character. Man, in giving woman a status in the nation equal to his own, and in extending to her the franchise, has performed the crowning act of a chivalry

that is built on noble tradition—a tradition that will never die because it is due to the spontaneous impulse of the God within him. Sex war on woman's part is wont to be an ungrateful and an ungracious act, no less than ridiculous.

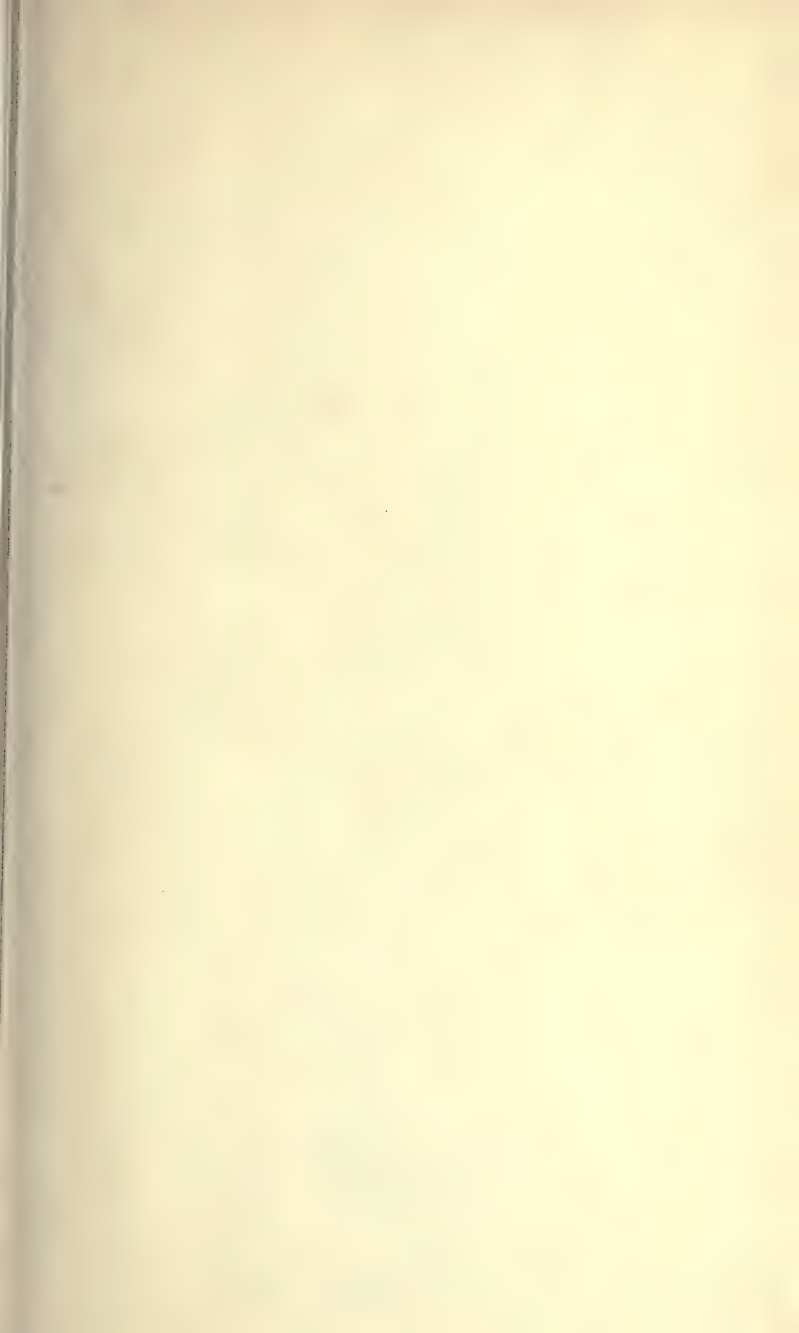
Behind all the talk of patriotism in the war there was generally a girl or woman somewhere in the background, the living embodiment of the force that drives men to give life and limb with uncomplaining heroism in the defence of the physically weaker sex. With that fulcrum to be found in man's higher nature what could woman not effect in the regeneration and general cleaning up of the world?

With such a lever all the festering sores of social conditions might well be made whole. Sores that no outward applications can ever remedy but that must find a cure from within, and that unremedied are the darkest spots on the lustre of his chivalry. With such a force to hand, if she will present a united front, putting behind her all the petty feelings and self-centred interests which the present generation should be done with, she could do magnificent service for all. The force is there to be used, of many wills waiting to be welded into one; it cannot remain neutral; if women do not use it for good it must manifest itself in evil.

It is only necessary for men to look round and see what the woman of to-day is doing and doing well, what she is interested in, and what she proposes to do in the future, to understand, not only what

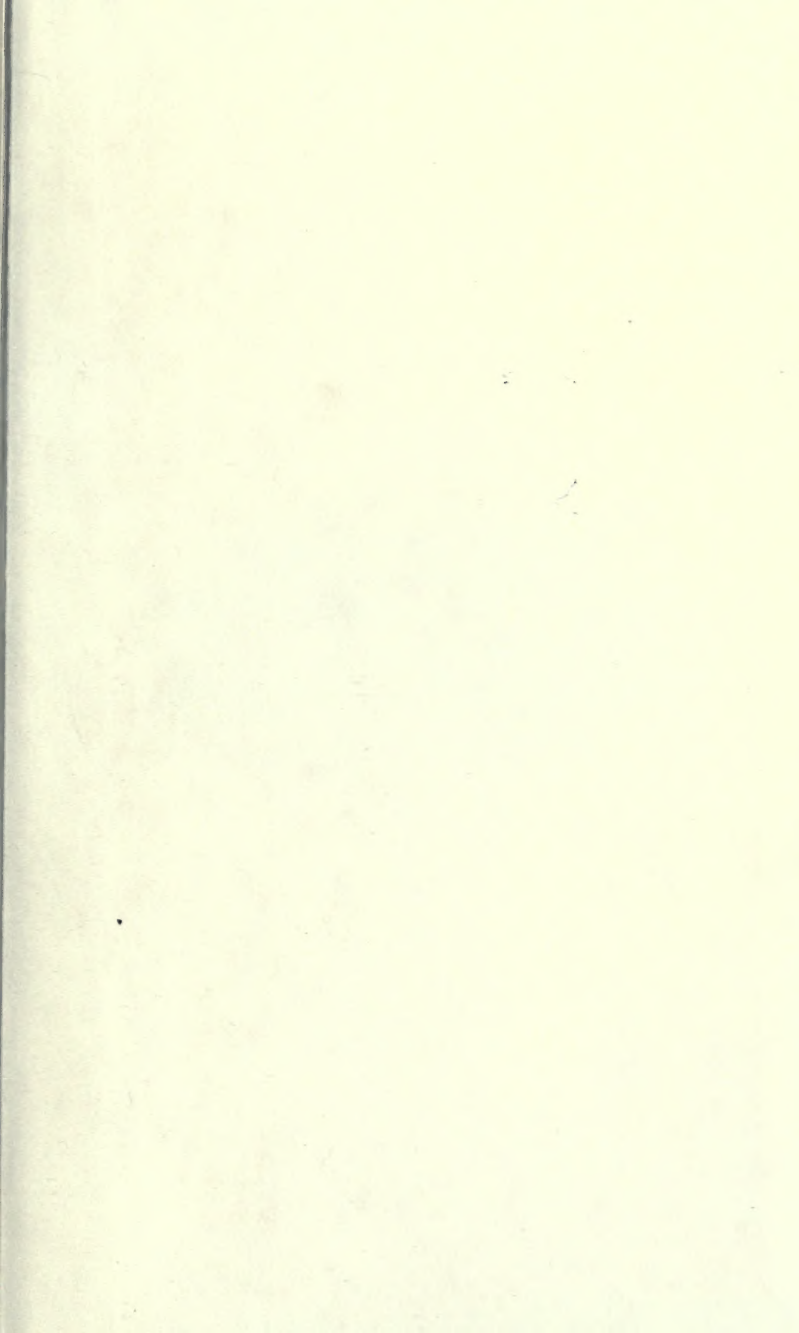
she has suffered in the past, mind and body, from the unnatural repression of her imposed environment, but also what a vast waste of dynamic energy must have been taking place, a loss to the world and to man himself.

Let us hope that in the future man and woman will stand shoulder to shoulder, each supplying what the other has not, for the benefit of the world and the greater progress of evolution; that, in the appeal to the higher nature of each, all sex war will be abolished, and that in the great Underworld where the shades of the mighty are assembled, King Ahasuerus and Vashti will at last shake hands.



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